

16/15
AN
E S S A Y
ON
F A I T H,
AND ITS
CONNECTION
WITH
GOOD WORKS.

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PLATE

COLLECTION

WITH



JOHN ROBERTSON

RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW
AND ONE OF THE LORDS OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF GLASGOW

1852

GLASGOW

[Handwritten mark]

TO
THE HONOURABLE
AND
MOST REVEREND
HIS GRACE
THE LORD ARCHBISHOP
OF
Y O R K,

OF LEARNING, VIRTUE, RELIGION,
THE FRIEND, THE PATRON, THE EXAMPLE,

THIS ESSAY IS INSCRIBED.

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TO

THE HONORABLE

AND

MR. J. B. HARRIS

OF THE

UNITED STATES

DEPARTMENT OF

THE ARMY

WASHINGTON, D. C.

THE HONORABLE

THIS IS BY IS INCHES

P R E F A C E.

WHEN error prevails, there are two ways by which the cause of truth may be maintained ; either by a direct and formal refutation of the error, or by a plain and effectual establishment of the truth.

The advocate for truth may descend into the field of controversy, he may engage every adversary that comes in his way, he may pursue and expose every single error. But error possesses a wide and dark dominion, and he who undertakes the conquest

of the whole, undertakes a labour that is almost infinite. It will still find some obscure corner to retire to, from which it will be found hard to dispossess it.

Error is various and changeable; a circumstance of which a skilful adversary will not fail to take the advantage. When his opinion is ready to be wrested from him, he will take entire possession of it again under another shape. He will lead us through all the mazes of controversy, and whilst we press hard upon him, will still find a way, amidst all its intricacies, to escape the pursuit.

He

PREFACE.

vii

He who engages in controversy, will find himself entangled in a net, where, tho' he may think it easy to break each single thread, yet he will find it an endless labour to break them all; and whilst he is thus engaged, a skillful adversary will not forget to weave the web anew.

Controversy is apt to bring on personal disputes; and a thousand incidents arise to lead us away from the main point, on which our strength is exercised, and consumed to no purpose. The love of victory is apt to take place of the love of truth. Even where we succeed, there is this circumstance disagreeable

A 4 to

to a benevolent mind, that our success must be attended with another's disgrace.

There is another way of removing error, and that is by a clear and full exposition of the truth. There is something much more pleasing to a liberal mind in the establishment of truth, than in the refutation of error; as it is more pleasant to rear a fair and well-proportioned edifice, than to pull down one that is mishapen and ill-proportioned.

It is for want of being furnished early with the principles of truth, that our minds are left open to error, and that so many
amongst

amongst us are ever fluctuating and unstable, ever ready to follow some new seducer. He who amidst the thickest gloom of ignorance, enthusiasm, and superstition, sets up truth to public view, at once disabuses the deluded multitude. He brings the rising sun-beam to chase away those imaginary forms which kept them in awe, and which owe their existence only to darkness.

The mere removal of error, leaves the mind no more than a blank. And though it be true, that error can hardly be refuted without advancing and presenting to the mind some truths, yet these being only casual and
random

random truths, not digested into order, nor supported on each side by those other truths with which they are closely connected, are easily withdrawn again and lost. To give truth a strong and lasting establishment, it must be fixed on its first principles as on a basis of adamant; truth must rise upon truth in due proportion and order, and all the parts must be strongly united. Against a mind thus prepared, the seducer will in vain waste his feeble efforts. The mind where truth resides is free from the power of delusion. And even such as have been enslaved by error, will at the approach of truth, feel their chains fall off

off as at the bidding of an angel.

I have been encouraged by considerations like these, to lay before the public a plain account of faith, hoping thereby to do more effectual service against enthusiasm, than by a direct attempt to refute its various errors.

Much hath been said on the subject of faith, and excellently said, by our most eminent Divines. But I do not recollect that they have any where left us a regular Theory of faith, describing its nature, its genuine powers and effects ; defining its boundaries, and tracing as it proceeds, the line which every
where

where divides it from the bordering enthusiasm. This hath been attempted in the following sheets, in as brief a manner as the copiousness and importance of the subject would allow. I have not entered into a consideration of those single texts of scripture which the enthusiast is eternally misapplying, but have attempted rather to build my doctrines on the general scope and design of the gospel. He who can once seize the true spirit and design of the gospel, will be the best prepared to understand the meaning of particular passages. And though this method does not furnish an answer to every single difficulty that may arise, yet it enables the
the

the intelligent reader to answer them for himself, by supplying him with those principles of truth, which will by degrees enlarge and fill his mind, and give it an internal strength that will enable it of itself successfully to contend with error.

I have endeavoured herein to imitate the skilful physician, who to cure disorders in the extremities of the body begins at the heart. He infuses the balsam into the vital stream, and the mass of the blood being once purified, carries as it circulates its healing virtues into the smallest vessels, and removes obstructions in the extremest capillary tubes.

It

It is proper to inform the reader, that this Essay is the substance of a course of sermons preached before the University of Oxford. This information is necessary, in order to give an appearance of propriety to one or two passages which have been retained, and which are addressed more particularly to our established seats of learning. At the same time I avail myself of the opportunity of adding, in favour of the book itself, that it comes forth with an advantage which it could not have enjoyed had it appeared originally in its present form, having already received the approbation of that learned body before whom the discourses were delivered. That part which
relates

P R E F A C E.

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relates to the origin and evidence of faith, being judged capable of doing service alone, was published at the request of the Vice-Chancellor and Heads of Houses as a single discourse, and hath gone through two impressions.

CON-

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AN

AN
ESSAY ON FAITH,
AND ITS
CONNECTION
WITH
GOOD WORKS.

SECTION I.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

“ **W**HAT must I do to be SECT.
I.
 “ saved ?” How impor-
 tant is this question, and
 how much doth it concern us to under-
 stand it clearly ! And fain would the
 serious enquirer flatter himself, that it
 cannot be difficult to obtain a full and
 B satis-

SECT. satisfactory solution of it, in a land
I. where the gospel-light is permitted to
shine without obstruction, and where
the word of life is freely laid open to
every eye.

PROVIDENCE hath generally made
truths clear as they are important. And
accordingly more hath been done to
illustrate this question than any other
that can be proposed. To clear up
this enquiry it was that the Son of God
himself came down on earth, and left
behind him the sacred records of his
will to guide all future ages in the
way of peace.

Yet, alas! though the world hath
now been in possession of this great
discovery for more than seventeen cen-
turies, when we look round on the
various and inconsistent opinions which
are still maintained concerning this great
point, one would almost be tempted
to think that the heavenly truth had
never yet been unveiled to human eye,
but

but was still surrounded with impene-
trable darkness. Propose this question
to different men amongst us, who all
pretend to fetch their information from
the scriptures, and one will affirm that
you may be saved by faith alone; an-
other will say, that it is necessary to
add to your faith virtue; a third will
assure you, that you may be saved
without any endeavours of your own,
that is in effect, without either faith or
virtue; that we are entirely passive in
the business of our salvation, and have
only to wait for the impressions of the
Holy Spirit upon our minds; though
the question itself supposeth that some-
thing must be done by ourselves, in
order to our being saved. "What must
" I DO to be saved?"

SECT.

I.

Painful must be the reflection to
every well-wisher of mankind, to think
how widely some must err in a point
that is equally interesting to all. But
on the other hand, were there any pro-
spect of success, how pleasing to a be-

SECT. nevolent mind must be the attempt, to
I. guide the unhappy wanderers back
to the saving truth which they have
lost!

That these different opinions however do not arise from any want of clearness in the revelation itself, will be readily granted on all hands. No words can represent truth so clearly as to secure it from all possibility of misrepresentation or mistake. Prejudice and passion often form so thick a cloud about the mind, as not to give admission even to the strongest ray of truth.

There is besides, a singularity in the conduct of revelation, which at the same time that it is a proof of wisdom, and a character of divinity, doth casually leave room for the seducer to build his pernicious designs upon, and gives some appearance of solidity even to the visions of enthusiasm.

Reve-

Revelation was intended for the use SECT.
of all mankind. The book therefore, I.
in which it is recorded, is a popular
work. The rules of faith and practice
are delivered in such a manner as to be
clear to the plain and untutored mind,
without observing always a metaphysical
precision, or pursuing a logical method.
Those books of morality and religion
which have been composed by the greatest
merely human understandings, are studiously
worked up into a regular system; where
principles are laid down, remote consequences
deduced from them, truths built upon
truths, and where we are at first sight
struck with the just disposition of the
parts, and the symmetry of the whole.
Revelation is a work of a different kind.
All its precepts arise naturally out of the
occasions on which they were delivered.
And these we know were extremely
various, apparently accidental, and un-
connected. Its doctrines lie scattered
about in a rich profusion, like the pro-
ductions of nature. The most unskil-

SECT. full hand can take from this store to

I.  supply his wants, and learns to bless the goodness of that common parent who hath made this ample provision for all. And thus the lowest and the busiest part of mankind, they who have neither leisure nor ability to digest a whole system, may reap the greatest benefit from the scriptures, whilst they cannot look into a single page without returning the wiser from it, and without meeting with many lessons of instruction whose force they may fully comprehend. Thus much was necessary to render the scriptures fit for common use.

However it is one argument, amongst many, of the divinity of the holy scriptures, that these seemingly unconnected parts do all yet unite in one great plan. Scattered like the stars in the firmament of heaven, like them too they are the parts of an harmonious system. The designs of the Almighty are distinguished from those of man,
by

by being of an extent far beyond all SECT.
the powers of human execution. The I.
work of revelation taking its rise in the ~~~~~
beginning of things, advanced slowly
through many ages towards its accom-
plishment. Many were the agents com-
missioned by heaven to labour in the
progress of this great work. And while
each seemed to study only his own
times, and to be intent only on the
execution of his own particular part,
he was working on the vast design of
heaven, in concert with those who had
lived many ages before him, or were
to arise in ages yet to come. And
what could give consistency to the la-
bours of men thus situated in times
and countries the most remote from
each other, amongst whom no human
means of communication could pos-
sibly lie open, but that the guiding
hand of him who "knows the end from
the beginning," and before whom the
secrets of all future ages are unfolded,
conducted the whole, and led each,
unknown to himself, to fill up his part

SECT. of the immense plan? Whilst therefore
I. the common eye sees nothing in the
 volume of Revelation, but separate predictions and miracles, distinct histories, undigested laws, and detached events; the just and attentive observer beholds an amazing chain of connection running throughout the whole, beholds the strongest union under an apparent disorder, and discerns what at first sight seemed perplexed and void of design, to be, as was beautifully said of the ways of providence, a "regular confusion."

It must necessarily happen, that many parts of revelation, at the same time that they served a more limited purpose, must have been planned in subservience to this great design. And therefore, if we overlook this reference, we can never be master of their true force, nor understand their full effect. It is the business of the faithful teacher of God's word, to study these relations, and to compare the revelation of one
 age

age with that of another. By this means, many of those passages which are otherwise "hard to be understood," will be cleared up, many new lights will be obtained, many truths better supported, and, every part mutually sustaining each other, revelation will stand firm and unshaken, and will appear, in the beautiful image of the royal Psalmist, like "a city that is at unity in itself." And thus will the faithful minister of God's word be enabled, by the divine blessing, to lead others more steadily in their duty, and to protect from error those who do not enjoy his abilities or opportunities. He will go before them like a skilful guide, who is not barely acquainted with one single beaten path, and therefore may easily be thrown beyond his knowledge, but is master of the whole country through which he is appointed to lead them.

SECT.

I.

Thus it is, that revelation hath, by the wise author of it, been at once adapted to the capacities of the vulgar,

SECT. vulgar, and to the most improved understandings; affording, at the same time, exercise for the brightest talents, and instructions suited to the vulgar mind. Nor is it necessary that the common Christian should be in possession of all those hidden stores in the system of revelation which learning gives access to; no more than that the peasant should understand all those wonders of nature, hidden from the vulgar eye, with which every part of the world around him is enriched. Both enjoy the fruits of these wonders, without understanding the sources from whence they flow.

But whilst this admirable disposition of the whole work of revelation gives many advantages to the sincere and able interpreter of God's word, it must necessarily lay it open to numberless misrepresentations when it comes into the hands of the ignorant or ill-disposed. When the blind will undertake to lead the way, and ignorance, with that confidence

fidence which is peculiar to itself, boldly SECT.
 steps into the seat of instruction, what I.
 wonder that we find errors multiplied; ~
 passages explained, not only without
 any regard to the general design of
 revelation, but even without attending
 to the purpose of the writer, or the
 tenour of the discourse to which they
 belong; and doctrines drawn from
 them, which are absolutely irreconcil-
 able to the attributes of God, and re-
 pugnant to every other plain and un-
 doubted doctrine of scripture? Hence
 the unity of the church is violated,
 and all order subverted; every contriver
 of new opinions, or reviver of those
 which have been long exploded, be-
 comes the leader of a sect; and he
 who can build the most mysterious
 doctrine on some obscure text, no mat-
 ter how little understood the doctrine
 be, or, as far as it can be understood,
 how little consistent with every clearer
 part of scripture; he who can, by these
 arts, involve the whole body of reve-
 lation in those clouds which dwell on
some

SECT. some mysterious part, is regarded as
I. one favoured with new lights, and
whilst he labours to render every thing
obscure, is held in admiration, as the
only clear interpreter of the oracles of
God.

Amidst all these jarring opinions,
one point only seems to remain uncon-
troverted, that faith is necessary in order
to salvation; faith in name at least, since
they are much divided about the true
import and extent of this term.

Taking therefore our beginning from
that in which all seem to agree, let
us enquire into the nature, the origin,
foundation and evidence, the tendency
and operations of faith.

SECTION

SECTION II.

Of the nature of faith.

LEAVING all human opinions SECT. II.
 behind us, let us have recourse
 to the sacred records of truth for in-
 formation, and learn from the gracious
 mouth of our Saviour himself, what
 we are to think of the true NATURE
 of faith.

To any one who is contented to
 understand the gospels in their plain
 and natural meaning, this enquiry can-
 not be long nor difficult. The apostles
 were appointed to convert the world
 to the christian faith, and to convey to
 all mankind the glad tidings of re-
 demption. When therefore they re-
 ceived their commission to execute this
 great work, one would expect to find
 some clear account of that faith, which
 they

SECT. they were to implant in the minds of

II.

mankind, and which was to be the foundation of the religion which they were to propagate. Accordingly the words of our Saviour's commission to them are these: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned."

Were we possessed only of this plain account of faith, I suppose no honest and well-meaning christian could be at a loss to understand the nature of that faith which he professes. It would then no longer be reckoned a thing which can neither be explained nor comprehended, nor would there be any room for those confused and mystic descriptions of it, which are calculated rather to perplex than to inform.

The

* Mark xvi. 15, 16.

The apostles are here directed to SECT.
II.
 preach the gospel, and to him that believeth the gospel, and submits to the laws of this new institution, salvation is promised. Here all is clear and perfectly intelligible. The single act of the mind concerned in faith, as it is here described by our Saviour himself, is that of believing; and the object of faith is that history of redemption delivered by the first inspired preachers of the gospel, and now recorded in their writings.

So plain and simple is the account of faith given us by the great author and finisher of it: and we cannot suppose that, at a time when he delivered his last instructions to those who were to preach his gospel, he would give them a defective account of that act by which converts were to be qualified for admission into his religion. This then is to be considered as the fundamental rule of faith, to which all subsequent accounts of it are to be referred.

And

SECT. And if we meet with difficulties in any
II.  part of the scripture where this subject
is treated of, to this test must we bring
them, and by this great original must
they be cleared up; both because, in
all reason, that which is obscure should
be explained by that which is manifestly
clear; and because the sacred writers
must be supposed always to have pre-
served a consistency with that great
commission, by virtue of which they
acted.

Accordingly we shall find this rule
of faith strictly adhered to, and strongly
confirmed in their practice. Every new
convert will be a fresh proof that our
conception of faith is just, and that we
have represented the instructions of our
Lord in the same sense in which his
apostles understood them.

The first fruits of their mission, those
three thousand souls who, as an earnest
of a plentiful harvest, came in at the
first wonderful effusion of the Holy
Ghost,

Ghost, are described as ^b “they that
 “gladly received the word;” and soon
 after, as they that ^c *believed*. SECT.
II.

The next history of an eminent conversion which we meet with, is that which followed upon Peter's healing the lame man, who was laid at the gate of the temple. The miracle having drawn a vast concourse of people together, Peter took the opportunity of exhorting them to embrace the christian faith. In the midst of his discourse he was seized by the magistrates, alarmed at his success; ^d “howbeit, many of
 “them which heard the word *believed*;
 “and the number of the men was about
 “five thousand.”

Soon after, the whole body of the faithful who had met together to thank God for the success with which he

C

had

^b Acts ii. 41.

^c Acts ii. 44.

^d Acts iv. 4.

SECT. had blessed their ministry, are thus described. * “ And the multitude of
 II. “ them that *believed*, were of one heart,
 “ and of one soul.”

The progress of the work of conversion is thus described : † “ And *believers* were the more added to the
 “ Lord, multitudes both men and
 “ women.”

When Philip first “ preached Christ
 “ in Samaria,” and delivered the unhappy people from the powerful delusions of the enchanter Simon, we are told, that ‡ “ they *believed* Philip,
 “ preaching the things concerning the
 “ kingdom of God, and the name of
 “ Jesus Christ,” and that “ they were
 “ baptized.”

“ If

* Acts iv. 32.

† Acts v. 14.

‡ Acts viii. 12.

^h "If thou *believest* with all thine heart," said the same apostle to the treasurer of Candace Queen of the Ethiopians, "thou mayest be baptized. And he answered and said, I *believe* that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

SECT.
II.

When the miracle of Peter's raising Tabitha to life was ⁱ "known throughout all Joppa, many *believed* in the Lord."

^k "Through his name," says Peter in his discourse to the devout Cornelius and his gentile friends, "whosoever *believeth* in him, shall receive remission of sins."

When some of the disciples, "which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen,

C 2

" came

^h Acts viii. 37.

ⁱ Acts ix. 42.

^k Acts x. 43.

SECT. " came unto Antioch, and spake unto
 II. " the Grecians, preaching the Lord
 " Jesus, ¹ the hand of the Lord was
 " with them ; and a great number *be-*
 " *lieved*, and turned unto the Lord."
 Thus providentially did God turn this
 persecution to the service of his cause,
 and made it a means of spreading that
 religion which it aimed to destroy.

When Sergius Paulus the governor
 of Cyprus, a prudent man, saw clearly
 " the hand of the Lord " in the pu-
 nishment which fell upon the forcerer
 Elymas at the word of Paul, ^m " he
 " *believed*, being astonished at the doc-
 " trine of the Lord."

ⁿ " Be it known unto you therefore,
 " men and brethren," said St. Paul in
 his " word of exhortation " in the syna-
 gogue at Antioch, " that through this
 " man

¹ Acts xi. 21.

^m Acts xiii. 12.

ⁿ Acts xiii. 38, 39.

“ man is preached unto you the for-
 “ giveness of sins; and by him all
 “ that *believe* are justified from all
 “ things, from which ye could not be
 “ justified by the law of Moses.”

SECT.
 II.

And when afterwards, in the same city, the apostles, opposed and rejected by the Jews, “ waxed bold,” and openly declared their mission to the Gentiles, and published the gracious purpose of heaven to extend “ salvation unto the ends of the earth, ° the “ Gentiles were glad, and glorified the “ word of the Lord: and as many as “ were ordained to eternal life *believed*. “ And the word of the Lord was “ published throughout all the region.” This event is called by the apostles, when at their return to Antioch they gave an account of the success of their mission, P “ the opening of the door “ of faith unto the Gentiles.”

C 3

When

° Acts xiii. 48, 49.

P Acts xiv. 27.

SECT.

II.

When the keeper of the prison at Philippi, alarmed at midnight by the shaking of the foundations of his prison, "called for a light, sprang in, "came trembling, and falling down "before his prisoners, Paul and Silas," proposed to them that important question, "What must I do to be saved?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," they replied, "and thou shalt be saved, "and thy house."

At Thessalonica, when Paul, "as "his manner was, went into the synagogue, and three sabbath-days "reasoned with the Jews out of the "scriptures, "some of them *believed*, "and comforted with Paul and Silas."

At Athens, "certain men clave unto him and *believed*."

At

^a Acts xvi. 31.

^r Acts xvii. 4.

^s Acts xvii. 34.

At Corinth, ^t "Crispus the chief ruler of the synagogue, *believed* on the Lord, with all his house, and many of the Athenians hearing, *believed*, and were baptized."

SECT.
II.

At Rome, ^u "some *believed* the things which were spoken, and some *believed not*."

Thus have we the clear testimony of our Lord himself descending down with equal clearness through his apostles; to instruct us in the nature of faith. It were easy to enlarge this account, and to strengthen it by many authorities from every book of the new testament. But this would be repeating what must be known to every one who peruses the sacred writings; whilst there could be little hopes of giving additional weight to the argument in the opinion of those, who can

C 4

find

^t Acts xviii. 8.

^u Acts xxviii. 24.

SECT. find means to elude a conclusion drawn
II. from the uniform practice of the apo-
stles founded on the clearest testimony
of our Lord.

The act of the mind then concerned in faith is simple, but the object is complex and extensive. The object of faith includes a great variety of matter, through which there runs one grand division that we must carefully attend to. It contains an history and a revelation ; an history of the whole progress of redemption from the first unfolding of the design soon after the fall, till its completion in the death and resurrection of our Lord ; and a revelation of whatever belongs to a future state, to heaven, and to eternity. When faith looks back on all that our blessed Saviour hath done and suffered for us, it is closely connected with gratitude and love ; when it looks forward to all those scenes of bliss and glory that are in reserve for us, it is then more immediately united with trust and hope.

Faith

Faith we find appeared very early in the world, for Abel was possessed of this virtue, and by faith ^w “ offered “ unto God a more excellent sacrifice “ than Cain.” But the object of faith was at that time extremely different from that which is now presented to us. Creation was then almost the only great act of mercy that faith could look back upon : for ^x “ through faith “ we understand that the worlds were “ framed by the word of God.” The historical object of faith therefore was at first small ; but as acts of divine mercy were multiplied, and the records of them enlarged, this part of the object encreased, And as it encreased, we find the promises of God, which were at first revealed in general terms, growing at the same time more distinct and explicit. The horizon, which bounds the view, enlarges as we advance forward in the history of revelation, so that each

SECT.
II.

^w Heb. xi. 4.
^x Heb. xi. 3.

SECT. each succeeding patriarch or prophet
 11. had a fuller prospect both of the blessings and the promises of God, than those that went before him. The history of past, and the promises of future mercies, were still encreasing together, till at length to us who have the happiness of seeing the work of redemption accomplished, and whatever concerns our eternal state placed in the clearest light, the object of faith is completely revealed, and appears before us in its full magnitude.

Faith then, in the early ages of the world, could have been little more than a belief and trust in the general promises of God. This agrees extremely well with that beautiful history of pristine faith, which we have in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. y “ These all died in faith, “ not having received the promises, “ but having seen them afar off, and
 “ were

y Heb. xi. 13.

“ were persuaded of them, and em-
 “ braced them, and confessed that they
 “ were strangers and pilgrims on the
 “ earth.”

SECT.

II.

How thankful then ought we to be for those superior lights with which we are blessed ; for that complete revelation, and that finished history of redeeming love which we enjoy ! And if the holy men who lived in that dawn of revelation, could chearfully sustain every difficulty by which their faith was tried, and could give such heroic proofs of their trust and dependance on God, how great must be the reproach to us if the Sun of Righteousness shining upon us cannot warm our cold affections into some suitable expressions of gratitude and duty !

SECTION

SECTION III.

Of the various kinds into which faith hath been commonly distinguished.

SECT.
III.

THE distinction which hath been remarked in the object of faith, and consequently in faith itself, as connected on one hand with love, on the other with trust, cannot escape us in reading the holy scriptures. Where ancient times are spoken of, we generally find the latter idea prevail. In the times of the gospel, we sometimes distinguish the one, and sometimes the other, and frequently faith is spoken of in its full extent, as comprehending both.

The reflex act of faith, or that which looks back on God's gracious dealings with mankind already past, is the first in order: it is that which first arises in the mind, and by which the other

other is introduced. It is the belief of God's mercies past, that can alone give any solid hopes, any well-grounded belief of mercies to come. This is the basis, and indeed the evidence, on which is built all our trust in the promises of God, all our hopes in futurity. And thus it is, that faith, which is in one light, as it looks forward towards future happiness, "the *substance* of things hoped for ;" is in another, as it rests on the foundation of former mercies, "the *evidence* of things not seen."

SECT.

III.

This distinction, important as it is, doth not however affect the nature of faith. Its essence, as seated in the mind, is still the same ; it is still a belief in the mercies of God, whether it may dwell on the records of his providence, and the history of redemption, or look forward into the boundless prospect of eternity. Just as vision is the same however its object may be changed, whether the eye is cast
downwards

SECT. downwards on the earth, or is lifted
III. up to heaven.

This seems to be the only distinction that is well founded in scripture, or is of any consequence in the study of our religion. It hath been usual however to multiply distinctions, and men who can be satisfied with nothing that is plain and simple, fond of knowledge ostentatious rather than useful, would think you know little of your religion, if you do not speak familiarly of several different kinds of faith. For, besides the true living faith, we are told that there is a *temporary* faith, an *historical* faith, a *speculative* faith, and a *faith of miracles*. But all these distinctions, it is apprehended, are of no use to the plain and honest believer, and will appear upon enquiry, to be without any just foundation in scripture.

The notion of a temporary faith, as a distinct kind of faith, is taken from our Saviour's parable of the sower. He
here

here represents, and beautifully illustrates, the reception which the gospel would meet with amongst different hearers by seed sown in different soils. In the first instance, "the seed fell by the way side," upon a soil that might have been naturally good, but was now trodden down, and become so firm and hard, that the seed could not enter into it. This represents a mind so hardened in impiety, that the word can make no impression upon it. The word is never received into the mind, and therefore, in this instance, there is in reality no faith.

SECT.

III.

In the two following instances, the seed is received. Faith is here produced, but from various causes it is prevented from working its proper effect. Not because the faith itself was of a wrong kind, and tares had been sown instead of wheat. The seed was right and sound, as appears by its timely vegetation. The word was properly received; and entertained at first even with

SECT. with joy, but then it wanted a due
 III. supply of nourishment. In the stony
 ground the surface was good, but there
 was no depth of earth. The plant grew
 and flourished in temperate seasons, but
 there wanted a depth and strength of
 soil; there wanted that deep attention,
 and serious application of mind, which
 alone could fix the root of faith in the
 heart, and enable it to stand firm in
 adverse times, and to endure the storms
 of persecution. In the thorny ground,
 there was no want of nourishment suf-
 ficient to have fed the plant, but it
 was all drawn off in supplying useless
 weeds. The mind was not averse to
 all the serious attention and close ap-
 plication of thought that could be re-
 quired, but that attention which should
 have been given to religion, was all
 exhausted on the thorny cares, or the
 luxuriant pleasures of life.

It was not therefore from any de-
 fect in the kind of faith, that it became
 fruitless, and died away before it came

to

to perfection, in either of these instances; but because it wanted that nourishment and due cultivation which it finds in the "honest and good heart," and which alone can enable it to bring forth fruit, thirty, sixty, or an hundred fold.

SECT.
III.

We are next to consider the case of an historical faith, or a faith which believes indeed the account of redemption, but at the same time looks upon it with cold indifference as an uninteresting story. But can we suppose such a case, the case of a man who can believe an history in which his own highest interests are closely interwoven, and yet believe himself uninterested in it? The supposition is manifestly inconsistent in itself. A man's passions or prejudices may keep him from attending to the gospel, or prevent the news of salvation from making any impression upon his mind, but, if he once believes its interesting truths, he cannot believe them with indifference.

D

We

SECT. We naturally take such a share even
III. in the interests of others, that we cannot attend to an history of the remotest events with absolute indifference. The annals of ages long since past awaken all our passions. Whilst we listen to the well told story of virtue in distress, the tear of pity steals down our cheek. If we read of the hero who bravely rescued a people from the oppression of a tyrant, or saved even private innocence from ruin, we feel our bosom beat with the approbation of the generous deed.

The truth is, that every history must in some degree move us, as it is more or less interesting. We cannot separate between the belief of the history, and the affections that it will naturally excite in us. Is it possible then to conceive a man believing the history of himself and of all the world being saved from endless ruin, and believing it with absolute indifference? It cannot be. The true faith and the historical

tical must coincide, where the history SECT.
is, the history of redemption. III.

The speculative faith is nearly allied to the historical. This is considered as opposed to a true practical faith. It must be allowed, that faith confined to the mind and understanding only, differs essentially from faith reduced to practice. But this is only saying, that faith is distinct from practice, and that faith and practice together are better than faith alone. Faith considered in itself, (as it must be considered where the question is about the nature of faith) is the same before and after practice. As the nature and powers of every cause are independent of its effect; or as a mechanical rule is the same in the conception of the artist, and in the execution of the mechanic. If this is not admitted, if all faith must be condemned as false and spurious under the name of speculative, because it hath not yet been carried into act, I beg it may be considered, how far

SECT. this decision will carry us. All faith,
III. even the purest and best, must be conceived in the heart before it can operate on the actions; and there was a time when the faith of the most exemplary men, even of the apostles themselves, was in this sense speculative.

I am well aware, that a speculative faith is frequently taken in a very different sense, as a belief like that of the most abstracted theorem, confined merely to speculation, and which hath in itself no relation or tendency to practice. But when we consider what hath been said under the foregoing article, I think there will be reason to call in question the very existence of this kind of faith. There can be no real belief of the great doctrines of christianity without some motions of the will to goodness. It is this which makes the case of the wicked christian so extremely unpardonable. He overrules and stifles these good motions, and
by

by violence suppresses those convictions and reproaches of conscience which he cannot but feel. They who suppose, that a man may indeed believe the gospel without feeling any impulse to goodness, surely do not well consider what the doctrines of the gospel are. A sinner can never go on at ease in a course of vicious indulgence, who believes that "doubtless there is a God " who judgeth the earth," and that he must, after this life, render a strict account of all his actions. He cannot look on the prospect of eternal bliss, without some secret " longings " after immortality ;" nor on scenes of endless misery, without " shrinking " back from destruction." But in spite of every impulse to goodness, he persists in wickedness. And it is this which will make it more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for those who sin under the light of the gospel.

SECT.
III.

SECT. But "the devils also believe, and

III. "tremble." True. Saint James, to

shew the absurdity of supposing that the design of christianity terminates in faith, reminds the abettors of that most dangerous tenet, that the devils themselves are almost as much christians as they are. But we must remark an essential difference between the case of evil spirits and that of men. They may indeed believe the truth of the gospel, but the gospel is no gospel, no tidings of joy to them. They know that the son of God, who comes to offer salvation to mankind, comes "to bruise the serpent's head." A belief of this must necessarily add to their horror and despair. But when man believes the gospel, he believes that to him is this word of salvation sent; he sees the son of God as *his* Redeemer and *his* Saviour; a belief of a very different kind, and which must be attended with very different emotions. In a word, that there may be a belief of the gospel, which is never "made perfect" by suitable works, fatal experience but too strongly

strongly compels us to admit: but the honour of our holy religion obliges us to maintain, that there can be no real belief of the truth of the gospel without a tendency to produce goodness.

SECT.
III.

The * faith of miracles alone remains to be considered. This is of two kinds, the passive, and the active. That is called the passive faith of miracles, which was generally required as a qualification for receiving the benefit of a miraculous cure. The nature of this faith will be clear from two or three remarkable instances.

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What

* An effectual faith of miracles it is supposed we do not at this time aspire after, or expect to be blessed with. And therefore should it really be proved to have been a distinct species of faith, it cannot be brought as an exception to that idea of faith which hath been before established. But even here we shall find the general character of faith which hath been deduced from our Saviour's words, and the practice of his apostles, clearly preserved.

SECT. What then was that faith of the
 III. Centurion, which our Lord himself admired, and which he honoured with this high encomium, "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel?" "Lord, I am not worthy," thus did this Roman express himself, "I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof." Thy personal attendance cannot be necessary to this miracle. Even my commands are executed at a distance by these soldiers, who are under my authority. But all nature is more obedient to thy will, than these soldiers are to mine: therefore speak the word only; obedient nature will execute the rest, and my servant shall be healed. Our Lord was struck with these exalted conceptions of the power by which he acted; and in answer to this sublime expression of faith, he replied, "Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee."

"Believe

^a Matth. viii. 13.

“ ^b Believe ye that I am able to do
 “ this?” said our Saviour to the blind
 men. “ They said unto him, Yea, Lord.
 “ Then touched he their eyes, saying,
 “ according to your faith, be it unto
 “ you.” Their addressing him by the
 title of “ Son of David,” may be con-
 sidered as an acknowledgment that they
 believed him to be the Messiah, since
 that was one of his prophetic cha-
 racters.

SECT.
 III.

Jesus thus described the power of
 this kind of faith to the man who
 brought his son to be healed of a
 dumb spirit. “ ^c If thou canst believe,
 “ all things are possible to him that
 “ believeth. And straightway the father
 “ of the child cried out, and said with
 “ tears, Lord, I believe; help thou
 “ mine unbelief.”

“ Fear

^b Matth. ix. 28.

^c Mark ix. 23, 24.

SECT. " ^d Fear not," said Jesus to the
 III. ruler of the synagogue, " *believe* only,
 " and thy daughter shall be made
 " whole."

When Jesus was preparing Martha for the resurrection of her brother,
 " ^e He said unto her, I am the resur-
 " rection and the life: he that *believeth*
 " in me, though he were dead, yet
 " shall he live. And whosoever liveth
 " and *believeth* in me, shall never die.
 " *Believest* thou this? She said unto
 " him, Yea, Lord, I *believe* that thou
 " art the Christ, the Son of God, which
 " should come into the world." And
 afterwards " Jesus said unto her, Said
 " I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest
 " *believe*, thou shouldest see the glory
 " of God?"

In all these instances the general character of faith is clearly preserved. In the

^d Luke viii. 50.

^e John xi. 25.

the last there is a full and explicit confession of one of the noblest articles of our faith, and indeed expressly of the fundamental article of all christian faith. " I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." In the other instances the act of faith is still the same : it is still a belief; differing only in the extent of the object. Martha was honoured with the peculiar confidence of our Lord, and therefore she had a clearer and fuller revelation of his will than others at that time enjoyed. They all expressed a firm belief of our Lord's supreme power over nature, and therefore of his divine mission. The great object of faith was not yet distinctly revealed to them : but they believed as much of it as was revealed. Their faith was like that of the patriarchs, a belief, connected with a trust, in the power and promises of God.

SECT.

III.

I may be permitted to add, that as these miraculous cures wrought on the body

SECT. body were preparatory to that salvation
 III. which was to be dispensed to the soul,
 so they seem to present us with an
 emblem of it in some very striking
 particulars. — The person to be healed
 is sensible of his own diseased state,
 and of his utter inability to relieve him-
 self. — He flies to our Redeemer for
 help, and trusts entirely in his power
 to save. — Though there are many ex-
 pressions which seem to ascribe the mi-
 racle to the virtue of faith, yet it is
 certain, that it was performed solely by
 the power and mercy of our Lord. —
 Those expressions therefore, so frequent-
 ly used on these occasions, “ Thy faith
 “ hath saved thee, thy faith hath made
 “ thee whole,” in consonance with ma-
 ny declarations of the like import used
 in speaking directly of salvation, cannot
 be understood to mean that faith was
 itself the operating and efficient cause
 in the miracle, but only that it was a
 necessary condition of receiving the
 blessing.

Our

Our Saviour himself clearly points out the transition from that "virtue" which went out of him" to relieve the body, to that healing virtue which he dispenses to the soul, by expressly joining on some occasions "remission of sins" with the bodily cure. "f Son," saith he to the sick of the palsy, "be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." And in answer to the injurious construction which the Scribes put upon this declaration, "Whether," continued he, "is easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, arise, and walk? But, that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins; then saith he," addressing himself "to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house:" clearly informing us, that his chief design in these miraculous cures wrought on the

^f Matth. ix. 2.

SECT. the body, was to prove to us his power
III. of giving salvation to the soul.

This remark will lead us to understand our Saviour's conduct on another occasion. The evangelist informs us, that " ² he did not many mighty miracles amongst his own countrymen because of their unbelief." Not that his divine power was exhausted or diminished, or its efficacy dependant on man, or restrained by any act of his; but that our Saviour chose to exert it there only where it could be subservient to the purposes of religion. We have reason to believe, from the many instances of that kind expressly mentioned, that he rarely performed these miraculous cures, but where he foresaw that the miracle would have an extensive and happy effect upon the mind. He expressly requires an open acknowledgment

² Matth. xiii. 58.

ledgment of their faith from many of SECT.
those, on whom, or at whose request, III.
the miracle was wrought ; and probably had always a regard to the disposition of those who were spectators of it. Thus did that divine goodness which directed all his actions to the greatest happiness of man, make one act of mercy introductive to a greater. Here therefore, in the case we are now considering, where the proper disposition to improve the blessing was wanting, where it would have answered no moral purpose, where the whole effect would have been the removal of bodily pain, the evangelist informs us, that he with-held his mighty works.

We may now pass on to consider that which is called the active faith of miracles. By which is meant that faith which was required as a condition of receiving the power of working miracles. Faith, even here, was not itself that active power which wrought the miracle, but only, as in the former case,

SECT. case, a condition or qualification of receiving it. Of this we have a clear proof in the case of the apostles themselves. That their faith was firmly established after they had been witnesses of our Lord's resurrection and ascension, cannot be doubted. But it was not till the feast of Pentecost that they were endued with "power from on high," by which they were enabled to work miracles.

To discover the nature of this faith, we need only have recourse to that promise of our Lord to his disciples by which he annexes to faith this power of working miracles. For all these powers, said he, shall be conferred on, or shall follow, "^h them that *believe*." From which it is clear, that even this faith, which at first sight may seem to be of a most particular nature, is in reality no more than the common faith
of

^h Mark xvi. 17.

of christians : it is no other than a be-
 lief in our Redeemer, to which he was
 pleased, for the establishment of his
 religion, to annex at one time the blef-
 sing of bodily cures ; at another, the
 power of working miracles.

SECT.
 III.

The result of all is, that the act
 of the mind in faith is invariable,
 though the object hath undergone many
 changes. At first it was no more than
 a promise of Redemption conceived in
 general terms. The object however
 was gradually enlarged, and as it was
 enlarged, became clearer and more dis-
 tinct, till all the promises that belong
 to this world, received their accom-
 plishment in our Saviour ; and all those
 which belong to a future state, were
 placed by him in the strongest light.

We may therefore lay aside all other
 distinctions, as of no importance to
 common christians at least, as tending
 only to encumber and embarrass their
 minds, and to open the way to a train

E of

SECT. of needless difficulties and groundless
III. suspicions. They need be under no
anxiety about the kind of their faith,
if they are only secure as to the sincerity of it.

Content then to follow the simplicity of the gospel, let us conclude, that there is in reality but one kind of faith: faith being every where a belief of redemption, and of all the blessings and promises that belong to it, as far as they are revealed. To us therefore, who have the happiness to see revelation finished and compleated in the gospel, and all saving truths there summed up and concentered, faith may be defined, A BELIEF OF THE GOSPEL.

This simple idea will be found to answer every purpose, and to be the basis of every character ascribed to faith in the holy scriptures. And were we to pursue our subject through all those paths in which revelation would lead us,

us, we should see how all the inspired writers correspond in this great point, as in every other; how all that they affirm of faith, arises from this fundamental idea; and how, like a central light, it discovers to us the symmetry of the whole christian system, and clears up the difficulties which must ever be inexplicable to such as attach themselves to some inferior part only, regardless of what is principal or dependent in the system, and losing sight of that grand order and connection which run through all the works of the Almighty. We should see the true origin of faith, how it arises, and how the divine flame is first kindled in the soul. We should see the tendency and the operations of faith, the glorious change that it works in the breast where it is received and cherished, how it gives new life to the soul that was before dead to all sense of goodness, how wonderfully it reinforces the cause of virtue within us, and lifts the heart from earth to heaven.

SECT.

III.

SECT.

III.

At present it must suffice to have attained a clear conception of the nature of faith, and to have taken a distinct view of our Lord's own account of it. A subject which could never be deemed unseasonable, but which seems to have a peculiar claim to our attention at this time, when so many unhappy divisions are multiplying amongst us, most of which seem to have been formed, and still to be supported upon the confused and mistaken representations which have been made of faith.

For some join with faith, in its very nature and first conception, a strong confidence of salvation, without any condition, and without reserve ; and consequently leave very little room for any anxiety about improvement in virtue, which must rather indeed seem superfluous where the great end of all virtue is supposed to be already attained by a prompt and hardy assurance that we shall be saved.

Others

Others give such accounts of faith SECT.
III.
as, far from conveying any distinct notion of what they undertake to describe, must leave their followers lost and bewildered, totally devoid of all clear apprehensions in themselves, and therefore in a fit disposition to follow wherever their leaders think fit to conduct them. One of these descriptions is so very extraordinary, that I cannot forbear laying it before my readers.

“ Faith,” says this writer, “ is not
 “ any single habit or act of the soul,
 “ nor ought it to be restrained to one
 “ faculty thereof only ; but it is some-
 “ thing made up of various acts, which,
 “ though not in a confused manner,
 “ may interfere one with the other,
 “ and in a kind of delightful fellowship
 “ and union, promote and help each
 “ other, and this constantly. It im-
 “ ports a change of the whole man,
 “ is the spring of the whole spiritual
 “ life ; and lastly, it denotes an holy
 “ diligence and energy of the whole
 E 3 “ soul

SECT. "soul towards God in Christ, so that
III. "its full compass can scarcely be com-
prehended in a distinct manner un-
der any one single idea *."

This is called "a plain and simple,
"a truly scriptural account of faith."
But how different is this from the clear
language of Him who is the true
light, and who came to lighten every
man that cometh into the world! Surely,
we may say of men who speak this
language, as the apostle did of some
teachers of new opinions in his days,
that whilst they desire to be teachers
of the law, they yet understand neither
what they say, nor whereof they af-
firm.

Amidst the concern, which the pro-
spect of these encreasing distractions in
our church must occasion, where shall
the

* See a treatise on Faith extracted and trans-
lated from WITSIUS by the reverend Mr.
MADAN.

the true friend of religion turn his eye
for consolation? Where, next under
heaven, but to those ancient seats of
learning, in which truth hath long
taken up her favourite residence? When
errors and corruptions in doctrine and
practice begin to spread their contagion,
here will religion expect to find her
pure doctrines taught, her genuine
principles laid deep in the minds of
those who are trained up for her ser-
vice. And hence will she hope to lead
them forth warmed with the instruc-
tions which they have received, and the
examples they have beheld, to diffuse
that knowledge which they have here
imbibed, and thus to remove the grow-
ing delusion.

SECT.
III.

To prepare them for this important
service, we must begin by endeavour-
ing to possess them with just and clear
conceptions of that faith which they
are to defend, that faith which is the
life and soul of our whole religion, and
without which it can neither be under-

SECT. stood, nor taught, nor practised as it
III. ought to be. And to engage us in
these labours, we who are devoted to
the study of all true and valuable know-
ledge, have many motives peculiar to
ourselves.

Were it the cause of abstracted truth
alone, that were sufficient to render it
interesting here. We would be thought
to reason justly, and to think with pro-
priety in matters of science alone ; and to
have clear and distinct ideas of all those
objects which are seen by the fainter
light of reason only. What then must
be our reproach, if, through our inat-
tention, we suffer perplexity and confu-
sion to remain around those great ob-
jects upon which all the brightness of
revelation shines ! Even philosophy calls
for our diligence here, if christianity
did not. And ill should we acquit our-
selves towards our Creator who hath
given us reason and abilities, and to-
wards his good providence, who, by
the hands of our founders and bene-
factors,

factors, hath blessed us with the means of improving them, if whilst we exert them in cultivating every branch of amusing or instructive science, we should neglect in the mean time to exercise them on the noblest of all objects; that wherein our own happiness, the honour of God, and the good of mankind are all equally concerned.

SECT.
III.

May we ever keep this object in our view; and when our holy religion shall be in danger of being obscured by ignorance, superstition, or enthusiasm, may the true light of the gospel be preserved here, and shining forth from hence may the gathering clouds of error and delusion be dispersed before it, and the sacred, saving truths of revelation again break forth in all their brightness, and be confessed everywhere in their native purity!

SECTION

SECTION IV.

Of the origin of faith.

SECT. IV. **I**F we would understand the true ORIGIN OF FAITH, we must have recourse to the great Author and Finisher of it.

By what means then did our Saviour, by what means did his Apostles, originally implant faith in the minds of the first converts? Did they implant it? or, did they leave it to be produced entirely by the inward operation of the Holy Spirit?

These are enquiries which the gospel alone can answer.

When the Jews demanded from our Lord an open and explicit declaration, whether he was the Messiah, or not,
he

he replied only by an appeal to those works which he did in his Father's name. These works, he said, spake for him, and would decide this matter more clearly than any words of his own could do. "Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." And afterwards he adds, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works ^a."

SECT.
IV.

In this passage our Lord clearly makes faith dependent on the testimony of his miracles. "If he did the works of his Father, he tells the Jews,

^a John x. 22, &c.

SECT. " Jews, that they ought to believe those
 IV. " works." On no other supposition doth
 he require their belief in him. " If
 " he did not the works of his Father,
 " he leaves them at full liberty to
 " reject his claim, and to withdraw
 " their belief;" contented that their
 faith should stand or fall, as it should ap-
 pear to be supported by this kind of
 evidence, or to want that support.

It is not on this occasion alone that
 our Saviour lays this ground of faith:
 we find it every where resting on the
 same foundation. His addresses to the
 understanding, his application of argu-
 ment and reasoning, his appeals to ex-
 ternal evidence, abound in all his dis-
 courses, and meet us in every part of
 his history. The instances of this kind
 are too numerous to be fully recited,
 much less to be insisted and enlarged
 upon as their importance deserves.
 I shall content myself therefore with
 laying before my readers a recapitulation
 of what hath been extracted from the

evangelical writings to our purpose; and shall give them in general, the result of a careful and attentive perusal of the gospels, and the history of the apostolical labours. This I shall do in the first place; and then shall add such reflections, as I hope may throw some light upon this important subject.

SECT.

IV.

In the first place then, we are expressly told, that the design of our Lord's forerunner was "to prepare the way of the Lord;" to dispose the hearts of men for that purer dispensation which was now to take place, and to turn their attention towards that great personage who was about to arise. " ^b He came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe." By his attestation, and by the many extraordinary circumstances in his birth and ministry, he introduced and opened the

^b John i. 7.

SECT. the evidence for the divine mission of
IV. our Lord.



The peculiar force of John's testimony lay in its being prophetic. Every common beholder could own our Lord to be the Messiah, after they had seen his miracles. But John bare witness to him before he had given any proofs of a divine power. It was his part to close the prophetic evidence of our Lord's divine mission. "He was a Prophet:" but he was at the same time "more than a Prophet." It was his great office to introduce that new dispensation which the other Prophets had only foretold. This peculiar situation gave occasion to a remarkable difference in the manner of confirming their testimony: All the antient Prophets were at a great distance from the grand object which they foretold. Hence it was necessary that they should be enabled to confirm their prophecies, and to procure them credit amongst their contemporaries, by miracles, or by some collateral

teral prophecy which received a speedy accomplishment. But the language of the Baptist was, "Behold the Lamb of God:" "There standeth one among you who is greater than I." John therefore, as we read, did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man, were true." His testimony to the character of our Lord was verified by the event; and his predictions were supported, not by any miracles of his own, but by the personal appearance, and the miracles of our Lord himself*.

SECT.
IV.

But

* What hath been here observed concerning the nature of the Baptist's testimony, will lead us to understand the design and the propriety of that message which he sent to our Lord by his disciples. Having finished the business of his own mission, in order to instruct his disciples that they were now to seek from the Lamb of God himself, the accomplishment of that testimony which he had borne of him, he sent two of them to our Lord, to enquire whether he claimed the cha-

SECT. But let us pass on to consider our
 IV. Lord's conduct and personal declarations on the subject.

The

character of the promised Messiah or not, and what proof he could give of his title to it. In answer to which our Lord said unto them, "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them." This answer is a clear reference to a signal † prophecy of Isaiah concerning the Messiah; and therefore it is manifest that he referred the enquirers for their conviction at once to the evidence of prophecies and miracles. The finger of God is manifest in this whole occurrence. It could not be by chance that John sent his disciples to propose this important question to our Lord at the very time when he was enabled to give the fullest satisfaction to it, and to confirm in so remarkable a manner the testimony of the Baptist. It could not be by chance that the enquiry after his divine character was made at that critical period when he was displaying the strongest marks of it;

† Isaiah lxi. See also Luke iv. 18.

The Evangelist does not neglect the very first occasion of teaching us the true

SECT.

IV.

it; in that "same hour" when he was engaged in "curing many of their infirmities and plagues, "and of evil spirits, and in giving sight to many "that were born blind."

We see clearly then the propriety of this enquiry, without deducing it from any supposed doubts or discontent in the mind of the Baptist himself, or even any incredulity in his disciples. John had frequently declared our Lord to be the Messiah, which was indeed the grand purpose of his own mission. But without his doubting, or his disciples disbelieving, this testimony, they must all alike have been sensible, that this testimony could have no force till it should be confirmed by the event; and till our Lord should prove himself to be what John had asserted him to be. The prophets had described the Messiah. John had pointed out our Saviour to the world as the person by them described. His testimony, therefore, must have been overthrown, had it not afterwards appeared that "all things that "John spake of this man were true." Hence it was natural, nay, it was necessary, that he should send his disciples to our Lord, that they might see the prophetic descriptions of the

F Messiah,

SECT. true design, and telling us the genuine effect of our Lord's miracles.

IV.

On the "beginning of miracles" which Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, he remarks,

Messiah, and the testimony of their master, verified in him. And when now the business of his own mission was accomplished; when his doctrine and his testimony of our Lord's divine character had made their due impression upon the people; when the report of the "mighty works of Christ" had reached him "in prison," and he perceived that our Saviour began to display that divine power which the prophets had ascribed to the Messiah, he then saw that this was the season pointed out to him by Providence, for sending his disciples to make this enquiry.

I gladly embrace this opportunity of acknowledging the pleasure I have received from the perusal of "An Enquiry into the Divine Missions of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ," by the ingenious Mr. BELL, and of referring my readers to it: where they will find the argument for the truth of Christianity arising from the several extraordinary circumstances in the birth and ministry of the Baptist, as they stand connected with the history of our Lord, drawn out with a masterly hand.

marks, that he thereby “^c manifested
 “ forth his glory, and his disciples be-
 “ lieved on him.”

SECT.
 IV.
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Our Saviour reproaches, in the fe-  
 vereft terms, thofe cities, which had  
 been witneffes of his mighty works  
 without being converted by them.  
 “<sup>d</sup> Wo unto thee, Chorazin; wo unto  
 “ thee, Bethfaida; for if the mighty  
 “ works had been done in Tyre and  
 “ Sidon, which have been done in  
 “ you, they had a great while ago  
 “ repented; fitting in fackcloth and  
 “ afhes. But it fhall be more tole-  
 “ rable for Tyre and Sidon at the  
 “ judgment than for you.”

His difpleafure againft thofe who  
 had refifted the cleareft evidence, is  
 expreffed in terms the ftrongeft and  
 moft awakening that can be imagined.

F 2 “ Where-

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<sup>c</sup> John ii. 11.

<sup>d</sup> Matth. xi. 21.

SECT. " Wherefore I say unto you, All  
 IV. " manner of sin and blasphemy shall  
 " be forgiven unto man, but the blas-  
 " phemy against the Holy Ghost shall  
 " not be forgiven unto man."

Our Lord appeals to the prophetic evidence of the antient scriptures for the conviction of the Jews. " ' Search  
 " the scriptures, says he, for in them  
 " ye think ye have eternal life: and  
 " they are they which testify of me.  
 " Had ye believed Moses, ye would  
 " have believed me: for he wrote of  
 " me. But if ye believe not his  
 " writings, how shall ye believe my  
 " words?"

Often does he press upon them the evidence arising from his miraculous works in proof of his divine mission, as of irresistible force. " ' If I do  
 " not

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\* Matth. xii. 31.

† John v. 39 and 46.

\* John x. 37, 38.

“ not the works of my Father, be-  
 “ lieve me not. But if I do, though ye  
 “ believe not me, believe the works.  
 “ <sup>h</sup> Believe me that I am in the Father,  
 “ and the Father in me: or else be-  
 “ lieve me for the very works sake.  
 “ <sup>i</sup> If I had not done among them  
 “ the works which none other man  
 “ did, they had not had fin. <sup>k</sup> I  
 “ have greater witness than that of  
 “ John: for the works which the Fa-  
 “ ther hath given me to finish, the  
 “ same works that I do, bear witness  
 “ of me, that my Father hath sent  
 “ me.”

SECT.  
 IV.

The sense which the people had of  
 this evidence, appears in many in-  
 stances.

F 3

“ When

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<sup>h</sup> John xiv. 11.

<sup>i</sup> John xv. 24.

<sup>k</sup> John v. 36.



SECT. " <sup>1</sup> When he was in Jerusalem at  
 IV. " the passover, in the feast-day, ma-  
 " ny believed in his name when they  
 " saw the miracles which he did."

" <sup>m</sup> Rabbi," said Nicodemus, " we  
 " know that thou art a teacher come  
 " from God; for no man can do  
 " these miracles that thou doest, ex-  
 " cept God be with him."

" <sup>n</sup> Come," said the woman of Sa-  
 maria, " come, see a man which told  
 " me all the things that ever I did :  
 " is not this the Christ? And many  
 " of the Samaritans of that city be-  
 " lieved on him, for the saying of  
 " the woman—And many more be-  
 " lieved because of his own word; and  
 " said unto the woman, Now we be-  
 " lieve, not because of thy saying : for  
 " we have heard him ourselves, and  
 " know

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<sup>1</sup> John ii. 23.

<sup>m</sup> John iii. 2.

<sup>n</sup> John iii. 41, &c.

“ know that this is indeed the Christ, SECT.  
 “ the Saviour of the world.” IV.

After the miracle of feeding the multitude with five barley-loaves and two small fishes, we are told, “ ° Then “ those men, when they had seen “ the miracle which Jesus did, said, “ This is of a truth that Prophet that “ should come into the world.” And on another occasion, “ P Many of the “ people believed on him, and said, “ When Christ cometh, will he do “ greater miracles than those which “ this man hath done?”

The reasoning of the man born blind is equally just and spirited. “ ° Herein,” said he to the Pharisees, “ is a marvellous thing, that ye know “ not whence he is, and yet he hath “ opened mine eyes. Now we know that

F 4

“ God

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° John vi. 14.

P John vii. 31.

° John ix. 30, &c.

SECT. " God heareth not sinners: but if  
 IV. " any man be a worshipper of God,  
 " and doeth his will, him he heareth.  
 " Since the world began was it not  
 " heard, that any man opened the  
 " eyes of one that was born blind.  
 " If this man were not of God, he  
 " could do nothing \*."

Upon

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\* The introduction to this miracle hath occasioned some difficulty. " The disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" This question hath been generally supposed to imply a prepossession in favour of the doctrine of a pre-existent state of souls. But it does not seem likely, that the apostles should introduce a doctrine, of which there are no traces either in the Old or New Testament; still less likely, that our Lord should pass so singular a doctrine, without any direct answer, or refutation.

There is another opinion with which the latter Jews were deeply infected, and which may have left some scruples in the minds of the apostles. I mean the opinion which the Jews entertained under their captivity, and in the calamitous times that followed, that all their sufferings

Upon more occasions than one does SECT.  
our Lord openly avow the design of IV.  
his

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ferings descended upon them from the crimes of their fathers, and were wholly unmerited on their own part. This opinion it was that drew from the pen of Ezekiel that severe remonstrance and animated vindication of the ways of providence, contained in the eighteenth chapter of his prophecy. Some remains of this opinion may still have possessed the minds of the apostles, full as they were at that time of all Jewish prejudices. They fancied they saw in the man born blind a case that could not be accounted for but by supposing him to suffer for a parent's guilt, "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" The question they thought admitted but of one reply. "The crime must precede the punishment. The punishment in this case commences before there could be any personal guilt in the sufferer. It must therefore descend from the parents sin." But our Lord shewed them, that the case admitted of a very different solution. "Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." "Suffering is not in this instance the effect of sin. This is a peculiar case; an exception from  
" the

SECT. his miracles at the very time of working them. As in the great miracle raising of Lazarus from the dead<sup>r</sup>. He declared to his disciples, that the sickness and death of Lazarus were only permitted by heaven for the sake of that glorious proof of divine power that he was about to give. "This sickness," said he, "is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." And again, "I am glad, for your sakes, that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." Nay, to remove all doubt as to the intention of the miracle, immediately before the powerful word was pronounced, which the dead man heard in his tomb and came forth, he

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"the ordinary course of God's providence. This private calamity is permitted for a public good: to give me an opportunity of displaying to the world that divine power by which I act."

\* John xi.



he declared before all the people, SECT.  
IV.  
 “ Because of the people which stand  
 “ by I said it, that they may believe  
 “ that thou hast sent me.” The ef-  
 fect was answerable, “ for many of  
 “ the Jews which came to Mary, and  
 “ had seen the things which Jesus  
 “ did, believed on him.” Nay, the  
 Jewish council themselves, blinded as  
 they were, could not help seeing the  
 natural consequence of miracles like  
 these, and were greatly alarmed.  
 “ What do we,” said they in deep  
 deliberation amongst themselves, “ for  
 “ this man doeth many miracles. If  
 “ we let him thus alone, all men  
 “ will believe on him.” And again,  
 “ The chief priests consulted that they  
 “ might put Lazarus also to death,  
 “ because that by reason of him,  
 “ many of the Jews went away, and  
 “ believed on Jesus.”

To carry on the same design it  
 was that our Lord appointed his Apo-  
 stles.

SECT. stles. " ' And ye also shall bear wit-

IV. " *ness*," said he, " because ye have  
 " been with me from the beginning."  
 His parting words, just before his ascension, again reminded them of the end of their institution. " ' Ye shall  
 " be witnesses unto me, both in Je-  
 " rusalem, and in all Judea, and in  
 " Samaria, and unto the uttermost  
 " part of the earth." And thus from heaven he declares his commission to St. Paul; " ' I have appeared unto  
 " thee for this purpose, to make thee  
 " a minister and a witness, both of  
 " those things which thou hast seen,  
 " and of those things in the which I  
 " will appear unto thee."

This is the character which the apostles upon all occasions claim to themselves. Matthias was chosen into the number of the apostles, that he might

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\* John xv. 27.

\* Acts i. 1.

\* Acts xxvi. 16.

might be “ w a witness with them” SECT.  
of the resurrection of Jesus. This IV.  
was their declaration before the council of the Jews; “ x We are his witnesses of these things; and so is  
“ also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath  
“ given to them that obey him.”

When Peter unfolds the gospel to Cornelius, he tells him, “ y We are  
“ witnesses of all things which he  
“ did both in the land of the Jews,  
“ and in Jerusalem.” And then he continues; “ Him God raised up the  
“ third day, and shewed him openly,  
“ not to all the people, but unto  
“ witnesses chosen before of God,  
“ even to us.” To the same purpose Paul speaks in the synagogue at Antioch. “ z He was seen many days  
“ of them which came up with him  
“ from

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w Acts i. 22.

x Acts v. 32.

y Acts x. 39.

z Acts xiii. 31.

SECT. "from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are

IV. "his witnesses unto the people." And

of himself he says, " <sup>a</sup> Having there-  
"fore obtained help of God, I con-  
"tinue unto this day witnessing both  
"to small and great."

We find this character of witnesses sustained not only by the declarations of the apostles, but by their practice. It was by the power of evidence that they undertook the conversion of the world. " <sup>b</sup> With great power gave the  
"apostles witness of the resurrection  
"of Jesus." This is manifest throughout the whole course of their ministry; from the first effusion of the Holy Ghost, through all the history of their private and separate labours.

It was from the visible effects of that power from on high shed forth on the apostles at the feast of Pentecost,

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<sup>a</sup> Acts xxi. 22.

<sup>b</sup> Acts iv. 33.

tecost, that St. Peter drew this con-  
 clusion; “<sup>c</sup> Therefore, let all the  
 “ house of Israel know assuredly, that  
 “ God hath made that same Jesus  
 “ whom ye have crucified, both Lord  
 “ and Christ.” By the force of this  
 evidence, explained and urged home  
 by the apostle, three thousand souls  
 were converted. By the next<sup>d</sup> public  
 miracle of healing the lame man at  
 the gate of the temple, the number  
 of converts was encreased to five thou-  
 sand. It was in consequence of<sup>e</sup> ma-  
 ny signs and wonders wrought by  
 the hands of the apostles, that “ be-  
 “ lievers were the more added to the  
 “ Lord, multitudes both of men and  
 “ women.”

If we attend still farther the progress  
 of the word of God, and behold  
 “<sup>f</sup> the number of the disciples mul-  
 “ tipling

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<sup>c</sup> Acts ii. 36.

<sup>d</sup> Acts iii. iv. 4.

<sup>e</sup> Acts v. 12, 14.

<sup>f</sup> Acts vi. 7, 8.



SECT. "tipling in Jerusalem greatly, and

IV. "a great company of the priests obedient to the faith;" we see at the same time "Stephen full of faith and power, doing great wonders and miracles among the people."

When the disciples, providentially "scattered abroad" by the first persecution at Jerusalem, "went every where preaching the word," along with the word they carried its evidence. "The hand of the Lord was with them," wherever they went, "and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."

Philip preached Christ in Samaria, and the inhabitants with one accord "gave heed unto those things which he spake, but it was because they heard and saw the miracles which he did."

We

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<sup>z</sup> Acts viii. 4.

<sup>a</sup> Acts xi. 21.

<sup>i</sup> Acts viii. 5, 6.

We find Paul, soon after his miraculous conversion, exerting all the powers of reasoning and argument in the service of religion, “<sup>k</sup> proving,” to the confusion of the Jews at Damascus, “that Jesus was the very Christ;” and “<sup>l</sup> disputing against the Grecians.”

SECT.  
IV.  
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“^m Arise,” said Peter to the paralytic Eneas, “Jesus Christ maketh thee whole. And he arose immediately. And all that dwelt at Lydda, and Saron, saw him, and turned to the Lord.”

At Iconium, Paul and Barnabas “ⁿ went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake that a great multitude both of the Jews, and also of the Greeks, believed.” And when “the Lord
G “ granted

^k Acts ix. 22.

^l Acts ix. 29.

^m Acts ix. 32, &c.

ⁿ Acts xiv. 1.

SECT. "granted signs and wonders to be
 IV. "done by their hands," he is said
 hereby to have "° given testimony
 "unto the word of his grace."

The inhabitants of Berea are justly applauded for their attention to scripture evidence, and their diligent researches after it, which is assigned as the cause of their belief. "P They "searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed."

Paul "q reasoned with the Thessalonians out of the scriptures;" and persuaded the Athenians, by r arguments drawn from the works of nature, and the ways of providence.

At s Corinth he "reasoned in the
 "fyna-

° Acts xiv. 3.

P Acts xvii. 11.

q Acts xvii. 2.

r Acts xvii. 16, &c.

s Acts xviii. 19.

“synagogue every sabbath, and per-
“suaded the Jews and the Greeks.”

SECT.

IV.

And at Ephesus likewise “he entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.”

Eloquence, joined to a deep knowledge of the scriptures, enabled Apollos “mightily to convince the Jews in Achaia, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.”

When Paul returned to Ephesus we find him again in the synagogue, “speaking boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.”

Nay, finding himself opposed in his ministry by some hardened unbelievers,

G 2

vers,

† Acts xviii. 19.

“ Acts xviii. 24, &c.

“ Acts xix. 8.

SECT. vers, he “ x disputed daily in the
 IV. “ school of one Tyrannus by the
 “ space of two years; so that all they
 “ which dwelt in Asia heard the
 “ word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews
 “ and Greeks. And God wrought
 “ special miracles by the hands of
 “ Paul.”

At Rome we find him alike indefatigable in “ y expounding and testifying the kingdom of God to the
 “ Jews, persuading them concerning
 “ Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from
 “ morning till evening.” And the historian leaves this great apostle before us, “ z preaching the kingdom of
 “ God to all that came in unto him,
 “ and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with
 “ all confidence.”

Thus

x Acts xix. 9.

y Acts xxviii. 23.

z Acts xxviii. 31.

Thus was evidence every where made the instrument of conversion in the hands of the apostles.

And to convey this evidence to all future ages, the history of our Saviour's life and miracles was recorded by the Evangelists.

St. Luke thus addresses Theophilus:
 “ It seemed good to me also, ha-
 ving had perfect understanding of
 all things from the very first, to
 write unto thee in order, most excel-
 lent Theophilus, that thou mightest
 know the certainty of those things
 wherein thou hast been instructed.”

In the same manner St. John thus explicitly declares the purpose of his writing. "b These are written, that ye " might believe that Jesus is the Christ, " the Son of God, and that believ-
G 3 " ing

G 3

“ ing

* Luke i. 3.

• John xx. 31.

SECT. "ing ye might have life through his
IV. "name."

The sum of the argument is this. Our blessed Lord himself, his Fore-runner, his Apostles, and his Historians, all unite in carrying on the work of conversion by means of external evidence. Infomuch that I believe we may safely assert, that there is not, in all the sacred history, the record of one conversion wrought, in the manner that some would have us believe all conversions are made, by inward illumination.

Nay, the faith of the apostles themselves was established in the ordinary way, by outward evidence. For their conversion it was, and through them for the conversion of the whole world, that our Lord "c shewed himself
" alive to them after his passion, by
" many infallible proofs." "d And
" he

^c Acts i. 3.

^d John xix. 35.

“ he that saw it bare record,” says SECT.
 St. John, “ and his record is true: IV.
 “ and he knoweth that he saith true,
 “ that ye might believe.”

The words of those who brought the first account of our Lord's resurrection, seemed to the apostles as “ ^e idle tales, and they believed them “ not.” How was this unbelief overcome? St. John tells us in his own case, as any other man would do, that he “ ^f saw and believed.” For their conviction it was that our Lord vouchsafed to “ ^g shew unto them his “ hands and his side.” And when ^h Thomas would not believe on the testimony of the other apostles, our Lord gave him that full evidence of his senses which he demanded. “ Tho-
 “ mas,” said he, “ reach hither thy
 G 4 “ finger,

^e Luke xxvi. 11.

^f John xx. 8.

^g John xx. 20.

^h John xx. 14, &c.

SECT. "finger, and behold my hands, and

IV. "reach hither thy hand, and thrust

"it into my side; and be not faith-

"less, but believing." When Tho-

mas, overcome by this evidence, and

melted by this condescension, broke

out, in the language of true faith,

into that exclamation, "MY LORD,

"AND MY GOD:" "Thomas," re-

plied our Lord, "thou hast believed,

"because thou hast seen me: blessed

"are they that have not seen, and

"yet have believed." This passage

demandes all our attention. Had faith

sprung from any inward impressiion,

Thomas might as well have believed

before this sensible conviction, as after

it. But he with-held his assent, till

it was extorted from him by the

evidence of his senses. Upon which

our Lord's remark is, "Blessed are

"they that have not seen, and yet

"have believed." That is, "The or-

"dinary means of blessing mankind

"with the knowledge of the chri-

"stian faith, will be by that evidence

"which

“ which thou hast resisted, the testi- SECT.
“ many of well informed witnesses: IV.
“ the evidence of sense is indeed
“ given to a few, that they may be
“ my chosen witnesses to the rest of
“ the world; but this kind of evi-
“ dence cannot be imparted to all;
“ the work of general conversion
“ must be carried on by rational and
“ historical evidence.” It must be
acknowledged that this occurrence is
extremely remarkable, and seems to
have been disposed by our Lord on
purpose to lay open to us, in one
striking incident, the whole doctrine
of the origin of faith.

If then this inward illumination did
not take place even in the age of
miracles, and in the times of the most
plentiful effusions of the Holy Spirit,
we can have no reason to expect it
in these days, when his extraordinary
communications are withdrawn. If it
did not give birth to the christian
faith even in its first production, we
can

SECT. can have no grounds to suppose it in
IV. the succession and continuance of it.

Thus is this doctrine established upon the fullest and clearest proof: a proof resting not upon some casual expression, which might be liable to various constructions, but upon a series of facts which cannot be mistaken; upon the uniform practice of our Lord and his apostles throughout their whole ministry. A proof of this nature can hardly leave room for any doubt or exception. We might safely therefore rest the matter here, were it not that this subject hath been unhappily obscured, more perhaps than any other, by the number of unintelligible things that have been advanced concerning it. This will be my apology for offering some farther considerations in support of that plain and simple account of the origin of faith, which we have from the gospels.

Many

Many observations to our purpose will arise from the nature of the human mind; the nature of that evidence by which the gospel is accompanied; and the nature of faith.

SECT.
IV.
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The Creator hath appointed stated ways of acting upon the mind, as well as upon the body. If we would excite belief in the mind, we reason, persuade, and prove. And we have no more doubt that belief will arise from conviction, than that motion will follow from impulse.

Our Saviour did not alter the nature of man, but dealt with him agreeably to what his Creator had made him. He sought access to the mind in the natural way, neither giving it any new powers, nor setting aside those which it originally possessed, nor introducing any change in its train of operations. When therefore he wanted to bring mankind to a faith in him as the Son of God, and the Saviour

SECT. Saviour of the world, he did not leave
IV. this faith to be generated by some new
and hidden communication within, but
had recourse to the established method
of argument, and external evidence. He
poured conviction into the mind by
that channel which the Creator had
originally opened; passing through a
series of unheard-of labours and dis-
tresses, voluntarily dying, that by re-
turning in triumph from the grave,
he might shew himself to be the Lord
of life; and thus finish a proof, which
all might understand, of his being
sent by God.

The nature of this evidence is next
to be considered.

The material world is always made
subservient to the intellectual. The
standing wonders of the creation prove
a God, and an over-ruling providence.
This was the basis of all religion as
it stood in the original state of man.
But after his fall from innocence,
and

and the rights of the first covenant, the system of religion was to be changed. To this great change the regular course of nature could not bear witness. The heavens above, and the earth beneath, proclaimed to each other a Creator's power, and wisdom, and goodness. Thus far their language was clear and expressive. But it could go no farther. They could not tell the superior wonders of mercy that were to be displayed in the new dispensation. To authenticate this, and to shew that the giver of this dispensation was still the Lord of nature, it was necessary, that nature, with all her laws, should appear to be under his controul. The new revelation of God's will therefore was attested by many new appearances in nature. And thus were miracles introduced.

Accordingly we find them still employed to their original end of witnessing the truth of revelation. Wherever any new discovery of the will
of

SECT.
IV.

SECT. of heaven was made, it was still at-
IV. tested by miracles; and the power of
working miracles devolved from prophet to prophet throughout the whole course of revelation. Let us lay all these wonders together, and weigh well that system of evidence by which the whole of revelation is supported. If we look back to paradise, we see it first rising there, and springing up with revelation itself. Thence do their kindred streams flow on together, miracles still succeeding miracles, and the mighty tide of evidence encreasing as it descends through all future times. Behold the amazing pomp of wonders that surrounds mount Sinai, and by which the Mosaic dispensation was introduced! Behold the grand but pleasing scene of miracles, displayed in the ministry of our Saviour and his apostles; miracles all the offspring of benevolence and heavenly goodness, all suited to the spirit of that gospel which they accompanied! In our own times behold, if not miracles,

cles, at least the manifest effect of SECT.
IV.
miracles, which do not yet cease to operate. The Jewish people are preserved in a wonderful state of dispersion amongst all nations, to tell to all the world the miraculous production of their law; and Christianity proves, by its very existence at this day, that the hand of heaven must have guarded it in its infant and oppressed state. Behold all these miracles uniting in one design, interwoven with prophecies, and thus forming a system of evidence equally admirable for the symmetry, the just disposition, of the parts; and the grandeur, extent, and harmony of the whole:—Behold all this, and then say to what end all this wonderful apparatus, this consent of all ages, this testimony of all nature, this concord of earth and heaven; if not to produce faith, or a belief of christianity by the power of evidence offered to our reason. Was this distribution of grand events throughout all ages no more than a vain
often-

SECT. ostentation of omnipotence, exhibited only to alarm and astonish the world, without serving any purpose of religion? Then indeed may we justly enquire, "to what purpose was all this waste of the precious ointment made;" to what end all this profusion of the miraculous power? For if conviction in the believer's mind be always produced by the immediate impression of the Holy Spirit, then are all the miracles, and all the records of them, at once rendered superfluous. The visible descent and appearance of the Holy Ghost on the apostles, with all those glorious demonstrations of "power from on high" that followed, might have been spared, if the world was to be converted, not by the visible and public operations of the Spirit, but by its inward and secret impressions working conviction in the mind of every individual. And we must remark upon our Lord's miracles in general, that if they were not intended for the conviction of mankind,

kind, their noblest end is destroyed. SECT.
 Beneficent as they were, we see but IV.
 half their lustre, if we consider them
 only as so many prescriptions to relieve
 a few individuals from bodily pain,
 and not as the perpetual means of ex-
 tending salvation through all future
 ages,

Farther. Where there is an esta-
 blished cause, manifest to all the world,
 fixed, permanent, and regular in its
 action, it were contrary to all order
 and analogy, to all the known pro-
 ceedings of God, either in the world
 of matter, or the world of spirits, to
 suppose the effect to be produced by
 another latent, and concealed, cause.
 Now we have the strongest established
 evidence for our faith in Christ. Shall
 then conviction, the natural effect of
 evidence, be supposed in this case
 to proceed from some other cause?
 Where one adequate cause of the
 effect appears, another supposed and
 doubtful cause will not readily be ad-

H mitted.

SECT. mitted. Where evidence, the univer-
 IV. sal cause of conviction, undeniably
 exists, it should seem to require an
 additional miracle to prevent the ef-
 fect, rather than to produce it. In
 short, either the natural or the spiri-
 tual miracle must be unnecessary. We
 are sure that the natural miracle doth
 exist; we must therefore suppose that
 the spiritual doth not.

Why hath God given us minds
 moveable by the weight of evidence,
 and why hath he prepared the evi-
 dence suited to move us, if nothing
 is to result from this correspondence?

The mind is moved by every in-
 ferior evidence in every lower con-
 cern, and can it be supposed to be un-
 moved by the highest evidence in the
 most important cause?

When we see the strongest exter-
 nal evidence applied, and to all ap-
 pearance conviction arising in the mind
 of

of the believer from the force of the evidence, it is strange to say still that this conviction arises from an inward illumination. It is as if when we see the seal applied to the wax, we should still insist, that the impression was not stamped by the seal, but was formed by some inward motion of the wax. SECT.
IV.

“Ye believe in God,” says our Saviour, “believe also in me.” The works of creation give us proofs of a God; the works of revelation in like manner prove a Redeemer. They who assert that faith in a Redeemer arises from an inward impression, notwithstanding the outward evidence fitted to produce it; may with equal appearance of truth and reason say, that the belief of a God likewise arises from an inward impression, notwithstanding the evidence that all creation bears to this truth.

If we go on to consider the nature of faith itself, we shall still see farther

SECT. reasons to conclude that it cannot have
 IV. this origin. Consciousness indeed be-
 belongs to faith, as it does to every
 other act of the mind. When we
 have faith, we must feel that we have
 it: but faith itself can never be a feel-
 ing, nor the effect of any feeling. Faith
 implies a belief of many facts: as that
 the Son of God came down from
 heaven, died, and rose again for us. It
 does not seem easy to conceive how
 we can have an inward feeling of the
 reality of these facts, if we set aside
 the history of them and its evidence.
 If it could be conceived, the operation
 would still seem unnecessary, because
 intended only to effect what the history,
 together with its evidence, is able to
 effect without it.

We must believe the history of pro-
 phecies and miracles, before we can
 believe our Saviour's divine mission.
 We must believe our Saviour's divine
 mission, before we can believe his revela-
 tions concerning redemption and a fu-
 ture

ture state. This is the natural and necessary order. Let those then, who imagine that their faith in a Redeemer is an immediate divine impression, consider, whether they did in reality conceive this faith, without any belief of the previous articles, and entirely independent of them. Let one instance be produced of faith in a Redeemer, where the history of redemption was not first known. Where the means of producing faith are applied, to suppose that the faith arises from a new miracle, is to suppose that the means are insufficient; that the miracles and prophecies are not well attested; that they are not sufficient to prove our Saviour's divine mission; or his divine mission being proved, that we have not sufficient grounds to believe what he hath revealed to us.

SECT.
IV.

To set aside the outward object in the production of faith, and to say that it arises entirely from within, independent of any power or impression

SECT. of outward evidence, is to introduce
IV. into religion that theory, alike admired
and rejected, which hath been applied
to sensation. God may indeed, by an act
of his creative power, excite faith in
the mind without its suitable evidence,
as he may stamp upon it the images
of things without the application of a
material world. This cannot be de-
nied. Yet still, for the same reasons
that we believe matter to exist out of
the mind, we must believe faith to
have its outward object likewise.

Thus do the nature of the human
mind, the nature of gospel evidence,
and the nature of faith itself, all con-
spire to support that account of the
origin of faith, which we have in the
gospels.

The same observations may be ap-
plied to that other office of inward illu-
mination, which our modern pretenders
to inspiration lay claim to, of guiding
and directing them in the practice of
reli-

religion; and in the ways of life. For SECT.
this interferes with that outward and IV.
established rule of life, which heaven
has laid before us in the holy scriptures,
as the other does with the established
evidence.

It will hardly be maintained that all these pretended inward feelings and illuminations are true and of divine original. Some have been confessedly delusive, and the parents of most diabolical errors. How then are the true to be distinguished from the delusive? There is no other way, but by comparing them with the word of God. If their suggestions be repugnant to that word, they must be false. If consonant to it, they may indeed be true, but must seem unnecessary, because they teach us nothing but what that word would teach us without their help. Thus does every consideration bring us back to that word of God, which was given us for our instruction in all divine truth. — If it be said

SECT. that these inward suggestions are supplemental to the word of God, and therefore not unnecessary; it must first be proved that revelation is incomplete, and that we have room to expect new revelations. Would they prove that they have been favoured with these new revelations; let them produce any article of faith, any rule either of belief or practice, which they have learnt by that means, and which we do not as clearly learn from the written word of God.

The method of inspiration, or inward impression, was indeed necessary, in the case of the apostles, to lead them into all truth, because their information could come only from heaven. But when they had received the heavenly gift of truth, and had provided for its conveyance to all the world by their teaching, and by the records of truth which they left for the use of all mankind, it was no longer necessary that others should be in-

instructed in the same manner. The SECT.
 business of inspiration was now fully IV.
 answered, and the world was hence-
 forth to learn that truth, from the
 written word of God, which the a-
 postles had composed from the dictates
 of the Spirit. The Spirit led the
 apostles into all truth for no other end,
 than that they might lead all the rest
 of the world into the same heavenly
 light. To say that all Christians are
 still to be led into all truth immedi-
 ately by the Spirit, is rendering the
 designation of the apostles of none
 effect. Since there can be no need
 of their interposition to convey the
 truths of revelation, if we may learn
 them by a more compendious way.

God indeed fed man with angel's
 food: but it was in a wilderness, where
 there was no natural food. But no
 sooner did his chosen people come into
 a land flowing with milk and honey,
 than this miraculous supply ceased,
 and they were left to be fed by the
 boun-

SECT. bounteous hand of nature. Such is
IV. the case of Christians. The miraculous
powers, and extraordinary illuminations
of the Holy Spirit, were necessary at
first, to introduce a religion new to the
world, and superior to reason; but as
soon as by means of these Christiani-
ty was established, and the volume of
scriptures compleated, we were thence-
forward left to be guided by the
common and established means.

But——whilst we “pluck up the
tares,” let us beware of “plucking up
“the wheat also.” I am sensible, that
the subject requires to be managed with
delicacy and discretion; and that this
free attempt to expose the errors of
enthusiasm, may be regarded by some,
as a want of respect for the doctrines
of our church. But God forbid that
truth and error should be so unhap-
pily complicated and interwoven with
each other, at least in points of this
importance, as that the veneration due
to the sacred character of truth should
be

be any sanction for falshood; or should
restrain us from speaking in the freest
manner, our disapprobation of it. How-
ver, to guard against all suspicion, it
may be necessary to trace out those
limits which clearly divide the pure
doctrines of our church, and of scrip-
ture, from the errors we have been
speaking of; and to point out, in a
few words, where the distinction lies
between the extravagant pretensions of
enthusiasm, and that influence of the
Holy Spirit without which we ac-
knowledge that all our best abilities are
impotence; our wisdom darkness and
folly.

SECT.
IV.

The Enthusiast then claims more than
even the apostles themselves enjoyed.
For he claims not only to be led by
the Spirit, as they were, into all truth,
but likewise to be endued with faith by
the Spirit alone, without the help of
evidence: a privilege which, we have
seen, the apostles never claimed.

If

SECT.

IV.

If these pretensions then are carried too far, which I suppose will readily be admitted, the question will be, how the influence of the Holy Spirit is limited; what we may reasonably expect from it; and how, in short, his ordinary assistance is distinguished from his extraordinary? By his extraordinary inspiration he taught the divinely commissioned preachers of religion, all those sacred truths which they were to publish to the world; and enabled them to prove their commission by prophecies and miracles. Does he still inspire those truths which he gave the apostles to publish? Does he still work conviction without that evidence which he himself fitted out? In a word, do the private operations of the heavenly Inspirer set aside his public? — This cannot be the case. We may be sure that his operations are all consistent; and so far from counter-acting, that they all concur with, and mutually support each other. Whenever therefore his ordinary influences are carried

so far, as plainly to interfere with his extraordinary, we may be sure that they are carried to excess. He does not give again in secret that evidence, or that light for our guidance in religion, which he had before publicly given. His private gifts are only such as may aid and promote the effects of his public.

SECT.

IV.

These principles, than which nothing can be more plain and undeniable, give us, with great precision, that line by which the ordinary influences of the Spirit are every where bounded. For they can be no more than supplemental to the extraordinary. And therefore the extent of his public operations, which is well known, and clearly defined, will in all cases limit the extent of the private.

It follows, that he does not act upon us merely by inward illumination, independently either of those powers of the mind which the Creator hath bestowed

SECT. bestowed upon us, or of those outward

IV. means of conviction which he himself hath established. He invigorates all the faculties of the soul, but acts only in concurrence with them, and by the intervention of outward and established means. Far from demanding a sacrifice of our own abilities, or from rendering them unnecessary, he calls for the utmost exertion of them. He strengthens the understanding, prompts and bends the will; but he does by no means enlighten the understanding, or move the will, independently of the common revelation. He enforces the impression of the evidence upon the mind; casts an heavenly radiance round those truths which have been revealed, and aids the effect of those motives upon the will which revelation sets before us.

The Creator hath fitted out our bodies in a curious manner for receiving and digesting food, and turning it to nourishment. But still the body cannot

cannot sustain itself, nor would this food turn to nourishment, without the divine blessing and support. So it is with the soul. The divine assistance is necessary to its encrease and nourishment; but the soul too has its food as well as the body, its outward means of nourishment by which the blessing acts.

SECT.

IV.

Our Saviour, even in his miracles, made use of the powers of nature. When he restored sight to the blind, he did not strike an inward light in the eye itself; but vision was still excited, in the way that the Creator at first established, by the common light of the sun. So when the world was to be converted, he did not dart an inward illumination into the mind of every individual: it was sufficient that he established for the use of all, AN EVIDENCE EQUAL TO THE SUN IN BRIGHTNESS.

I can-

SECT. I cannot conclude without adding a
IV. few words concerning the evil tendency of the opinion we have been considering, especially in places dedicated to the united service of religion and learning.

If reason is excluded from all share in forming and conducting the principles of our faith; if the whole work of religion is supposed to be carried on by some concealed operations within, in which we are entirely passive, having nothing to do but to obey the secret impulse; how unfavourable an influence must this doctrine shed on all the business of these places where we have hitherto been accustomed to consider learning as bearing the honourable relation of handmaid to religion! Alas, how degraded must all the functions of reason appear, when thus divorced from virtue, her noblest companion; and how mean, how trifling, all her labours, when they are no longer conceived to have any tendency to promote

note the only real business of this SECT.
life, our preparation for a better! If IV.
opinions of this kind once come to
prevail amongst us, like an unkindly
damp, they must chill all the powers of
the mind. For what is there, what
can there be, to excite or call her
forth to action, now that her highest
encouragement, her fairest palm of
honour, is snatched from her? Fare-
wel then all efforts of genius, all
generous emulation in the race of
glory! Farewel all thirst of know-
ledge, all culture of polite literature,
or useful science; all that can adorn
or improve the mind, farewell: and
welcome, in their stead, monkish igno-
rance and barbarism! The mind, a-
bandoned to the guidance of a fan-
cied inspiration, runs into all the wilds
of enthusiasm: there all neglected and
melancholy it wanders; haunted by
dark and gloomy visions; deserted by
itself; and lost to every thing that is
rational, manly, and truly noble. All
human learning will be reckoned pro-

SECT. fane and heathenish, and will be

IV. supposed to vitiate and debauch the
mind, instead of improving it. Reason itself will be regarded with a jealous eye, as the rival of true religion. These noble structures, which have been through ages sacred to learning, will be esteemed the temples of a vain idol; and all our studies, idolatry.

But, on the other hand, if reason, when duly employed, be under the conduct and blessing of the Holy Spirit; how must our confidence in this heavenly support bear us up under all the toils of study! Cherished by this warmth from heaven, the human mind will attain to its full maturity. This consideration stamps a new dignity on the meanest of our labours; and human learning is ennobled by its alliance with divine. Every art of reasoning, every exercise of the mind, will be regarded as a discipline to prepare us for actions truly
worthy

worthy of our ambition; and whilst we give strength and activity to the understanding in the schools, we shall be considered as training it up for the service of God. Then will the champion of religion come laden with spoils gathered from every field of science, to enter upon the sacred ground. There, with all the united powers of reason and learning, he will maintain his cause against enthusiasm on the one hand, and infidelity on the other: and will establish the evidence and the principles of his religion on their proper basis; on that rock, against which no enemy shall ever prevail. Then will true religion and useful learning flourish together. Then will all our studies tend at once to the glory of God, and to the honour of human nature. Then will our religion be truly "a reasonable service;" and then may we be said to worship God, not only in SPIRIT, but also in TRUTH.

SECT.
IV.


SECTION V.

*Of the tendency of faith.*SECT.
V.
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HAVING already considered the nature and origin of faith; having seen what it is, and how it arises in the mind; we come now to consider its TENDENCY and OPERATIONS; how it acts upon the mind, and what is the result of this action.

And here three enquiries will succeed each other. I. Whether faith hath in reality any tendency to produce good works or not? And if it shall appear to have such a tendency, then, II. What is the nature of its connection with good works? III. What is the full effect of its operation upon the mind, where it is duly cultivated and improved?

We

We are to enquire, in the first place, SECT.  
V.  
whether faith hath in reality any tendency to produce good works or not.

It is one great proof at once of the wisdom and goodness of the Creator, that there is a mutual communication and intercourse of good amongst all his works. If we consider the structure of things upon this earth which we inhabit, we find nothing whose design centers in itself alone; nothing but what is formed with manifest propensities out of itself, and with a visible tendency to the general good. There is in the works of nature itself a sort of inanimate benevolence, or at least an image of benevolence. There is a connection, a manifest subordination of each species to the good of all, running through every thing we behold here; and even our world itself is united by the chain of a mutual influence with other worlds. Those vast orbs which revolve around us do not play at large in the im-

SECT. V.  menſe field of ſpace, but gravitate towards each other : their particular motions are governed by their mutual attractions, and each lends its influence to guide the reſt in their orbits. Our imagination cannot help going farther, and repreſenting this ſyſtem of ours to be to other ſyſtems, what our planet confeſſedly is to other planets. Systems form with ſyſtems their remoter alliances, and revolve in ampler orbits. Thus is the harmony of nature filled up.

If we aſcend from matter to life and intelligence, we find that benevolence which is ſtrongly pourtrayed in matter, living, and pervading every where in this nobler world. Every being here bears ſtrong marks of this univerſal law, has a thouſand evident relations to the advantage of others, a thouſand connections with their intereſts, from which it cannot diſengage itſelf without injury to its own. This is clearly diſcoverable in ſome degree  
in

in the lowest ranks of animal beings. SECT.  
But as we rise higher in the scale of V.  
creation, benevolence still makes a  
more considerable part in the design;  
so that in every superior class, the  
power of contributing to the happiness  
of others, encreases in full proportion  
to the powers belonging to private and  
selfish enjoyment. Nay, it may perhaps  
be said, that these benevolent powers  
do chiefly constitute the superiority,  
and are of themselves the noblest mark  
of distinction. It is thus that in the  
human mind the selfish and the social  
passions are so closely interwoven with  
each other, that men of the acutest  
penetration and genius, when they have  
undertaken to analyse the mind, and to  
trace human actions to their source,  
have been lost in the research, and  
have not been able to tell us with any  
accuracy, where or how they are dis-  
tinguished. It is thus that we are  
prompted by the strongest instincts to  
seek the good of others, which is by  
the most powerful feelings brought



SECT. home to ourselves. It is thus that  
V. sympathy often seizes the soul, and  
takes such entire possession of us that  
we are for a time wholly forgetful of  
ourselves. It is thus that reflection on  
having done good to others, constitutes  
our finest enjoyments; that all our no-  
blest powers are brought to perfection,  
and our best endowments acquired by  
seeking the happiness of others; and  
that the richest furniture of our minds,  
the virtues, are so entirely at the ser-  
vice of others, as that they can hard-  
ly be called our own.

Shall we say then, that a law so  
subserving to beauty and benevolence  
hath been neglected in religion? That  
this last great system of christianity is  
built on narrower principles than ei-  
ther the material or the moral? That  
whilst they are all regular, consistent,  
and harmonious, here on the con-  
trary every thing is detached and un-  
connected, the parts bearing no rela-  
tion to each other, nor to the general  
good?

good? Shall we suppose, that faith SECT.  
V.  
stands at the centre of this system a solitary and a selfish thing, a neutral principle alike indifferent to good or bad actions, dispensing no influence in favour of benevolence, and wholly unconnected with virtue? Then surely it had been better if we had been left entirely to the conduct of nature and reason; since corrupted as our nature is, and weak our reason, there is still under all our degeneracy and weakness, some considerable remains of regard for the good of others, which nature continually gives birth to, and which reason approves; whereas, on the supposition here considered, faith hath nothing in it that is generous or social, no tendency to enlarge our minds, and open them to a feeling of another's happiness, or to excite and animate us to the pursuit of it.

But this cannot be. It cannot be that He who laid down his life for the good of mankind, should have no regard

SECT. V. regard for mankind's good in laying the foundation of his religion. It cannot be, that He who died because we had departed from virtue, should establish his new dispensation on principles which have no tendency to bring us back to virtue.

“ In Christ Jesus,” saith the apostle, that is, in the religious dispensation finished and established by him, “ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith working by love <sup>a</sup>.” It appears then, that faith worketh, or as the \* original expression implies, is attended with an energy or inward force. And if it works within us, it must work to some certain end; which can be only the production of its proper fruits, good works.

If faith hath no connection with goodness, then may a man be at once  
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<sup>a</sup> Gal. v. 6.

\* ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ἐνεργούμενη, Faith working within us.

a true and compleat christian by virtue of his faith, whilst he continues an unconverted heathen in practice. Then is faith intended only to fill the head, and to amuse the imagination, without influencing the will, or subduing the heart. It is contented with reducing to its obedience, and cultivating only the most barren parts of the soul, whilst it leaves all the fruitful regions in their wild and barbarous state. But it is undeniable, that faith brings along with it into the breast of the christian many new motives to virtue which the heathen is a stranger to. It is the resisting these motives, and acting in opposition to them, that constitutes the peculiar guilt of the wicked christian. Hence it is that the life of the wicked christian, is a perpetual contradiction to itself; and that wicked works and faith united form the most unnatural, let me say, the most monstrous, of all characters.

SECT.

V.

The gospel instructs us clearly in every part of our duty; it shews us  
our

SECT. our true situation here, and our ex-  
 V. pectations in eternity. The Creator  
 appointed two great lights in the firmament, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night, not merely to please the eye, and to gild the creation, but that man might be enabled to act with freedom, and to perform all the business of life. And can we imagine that this great light of religion was set up without any regard to action? It surely was given us for some higher end than merely that we might contemplate and admire it; it was given to enlighten us in the performance of the most important work, and to guide us in the great employment of doing good.

But the word of God is not only  
 “<sup>b</sup> a lamp unto our feet, and a light  
 “ unto our paths;” it not only shews us  
 our duty, but impels us by the strongest  
 motives to fulfil it. Whatever those  
 motives

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<sup>b</sup> Ps. cxix. 105.



motives are by which we are most readily influenced in the affairs of life, faith brings them all to act upon us in favour of virtue. If we can be touched by more generous motives; if the nobler affections of gratitude and love have any power over us, faith points to a Saviour expiring on the cross for our sakes. If we can feel for the good of others, and if a benevolent heart unites their happiness to ours, faith shews us a whole world redeemed, and attaches us to their interests by bonds which shall never be dissolved. If our own interests are dear to us, if hopes or fears can move us, faith leads the enraptured soul amongst angels and purest spirits to scenes of endless bliss; or unbars before the affrighted imagination, the gates of hell.

And need we after all this, enquire whether faith stirs up the mind to action, or if it remains there in a still and quiescent state? We must know

as

SECT.  
V.

SECT. as little of the nature of faith, as of  
V. the constitution of the mind, to think  
this possible. Faith comes armed in every power by which the mind is usually moved; and the mind is every way disposed to apprehend, to feel, to be governed by its force. It is impossible then to conceive that all this power should be absolutely lost, and that no effect should result from it: that whilst matter, inert and resisting matter, is alive to every impulse, and obedient to every action, the free and active soul, in the mean time, should remain motionless and inanimate under the impression of the strongest powers that can be applied to it: since in order to all this we must suppose, that in religion every thing is taken out of its natural state; that here all motives lose their force, and the mind its feeling.

We conclude therefore, that faith hath a tendency, and that a very strong one, to produce good works.

It

It may be proper, before we proceed, SECT.  
V.  
to point out in a few words, the use and importance of this enquiry. 1. If faith hath no such tendency, then we must believe that the design of all religion terminates here, that we have already arrived at its utmost limits, and that faith saves us alone, and by its own inherent virtue. But if this tendency is manifest, and the clear result of its very nature and constitution, then it is evident, that religion hath much farther views, and looks beyond faith itself. The clearing of this question therefore is securing a very important station, without which we could not with any security have pursued our enquiries farther, or have attempted to establish any conclusions beyond it.

2. Unless we discern this tendency of faith to produce goodness, we can neither see the wisdom of the author of our religion in the constitution of it, nor can we entertain a proper value for this first principle  
of

SECT. of our religion, nor proper notions  
V. of its dignity. When we discern  
this tendency of faith, we see a reason why it was made the leading condition of our salvation: we see a reason worthy the approbation of heaven, for the distinguished place it possesses in the christian dispensation. It was made the chief corner-stone in our religion, because it was fitted to support the whole fabric.

And thus do we prove the wisdom of the giver of revelation, in the same way that we prove the wisdom of God from the works of the creation. It is from the wise disposition of every part of nature, the undeniable fitness of every thing to some useful end, that we conclude beyond a doubt the wisdom of the Creator. And in religion therefore, when we see every thing put together with the same wisdom of design, we must again acknowledge the hand of the same wise Master-BUILDER. An illustrious proof this, amongst  
many

many others, that both systems come from the same author! We see the same shining characters of divine wisdom in both. In the volume of revelation we clearly distinguish the same **HAND-WRITING OF THE DEITY**, that we had been before accustomed to in reading the volume of nature.

SECT.

V.

II. We may now proceed to our second enquiry, viz. What is the nature of that connection which subsists between faith and good works.

The connections between causes and effects are of two distinct kinds. That between physical causes and their effects is necessary and invariable. The cause acting in the same circumstances never fails to produce the same effect. So that the cause being given, the effect is sure to follow. There are other causes which have not the same necessary and invariable operation; when the cause being given, the event is yet uncertain. They have a

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tendency



SECT. tendency to produce a certain effect,  
V. but being applied to agents which  
have a freedom and power of their own, there must be a concurrence of this power and freedom to the actual production of the effect. The natural tendency of the cause is ever liable to be defeated by an opposition of that free and powerful agent to whom it is applied. These are stiled moral causes; and act not by a compulsive power which forces the effect, but by an influence which enclines the moral agent to make it his own free act.

We are to enquire to which of these classes that connection belongs, which hath been proved to subsist between faith and virtue.

Some would persuade us, that faith produces good works naturally and necessarily. They are ever talking as if they took them to be in fact the same thing, or at least to be inseparable from each other; and telling us that  
faith

faith once having taken possession of the mind, good works flow from it as necessarily as light from the sun. SECT.  
V.  
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But this opinion is contradicted first of all by the nature of man, and the nature of virtue as it exists in man. For if good works are produced by a natural and necessary operation of faith, then man becomes a mere natural agent, like the sun or the air, and the work is no longer a moral but a physical effect. Faith makes him good, as the circulation of the blood makes him healthy; and the poor man is relieved by his bounty, just as the earth is refreshed by a timely shower. But can we suppose that freedom was given us only for trivial uses, and for low concerns; and that we have a choice of every other object except of virtue, which alone is worthy of our choice? Can we suppose that faith despoils us of the noblest gift of heaven, and degrades, instead of exalting, our nature, by depriving us of that power which

SECT. placed us at the head of this lower
 V. creation? This is contrary to our Lord's
 account of the design of his religion,
 who assures us that it was given to
 recover and enlarge our liberty, and
 not to take it away. "c Then said Jesus
 " to the Jews which believed on him,
 " if ye continue in my word, then are
 " ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall
 " know the truth, and the truth shall
 " make you free. If the Son shall make
 " you free, ye shall be free in deed."

But 2dly, The slightest reflection on
 the nature and origin of faith will
 shew us, that faith cannot have this
 compulsive power. Faith is a belief of
 the gospel, arising, as we have seen, on
 the evidence of the gospel. No sooner
 therefore is this evidence known and
 believed, than faith is fully established.
 Had faith then produced good works
 by a natural necessity, the gospel would
 have been compleated in its evidence,
 and

c John viii. 31--36.

and nothing need have been added beyond. For faith itself being completely established, and good works, as is here supposed, being the necessary consequence of faith, it is plain that the whole business of the gospel was already accomplished. Any rule to direct the operation of faith, whilst that operation is supposed to be necessary, must appear absolutely superfluous; and a written system of laws for the conduct of believers must have been as useless and vain, as a system of written laws for the conduct of nature in the work of vegetation, in the movement of the planets, or in any other of her stated operations.

SECT.
V.


But the all-wise giver of revelation seems plainly to have had very different conceptions of the power of faith. He did not think fit to rest in the establishment of faith alone, but added a rule of life; filled up, and finished that rule in all its parts for our guidance in every branch of duty;

SECT. annexed the strongest sanctions to move
V. us to an observance of this rule; and
gave the brightest illustration of it in
his own great example. From all
which it is clear, that our Saviour did
not give to faith a power of produ-
cing good works necessarily and spon-
taneously, since in that case he would
not have added the light of laws, the
power of sanctions, the influence of
example. This would have been ad-
ding a doubtful and precarious power
for the production of an effect, which
was already secured by the establish-
ment of a necessary power.

This point will receive a strong il-
lustration from the case of the first
christians. Amongst ourselves, and
wherever the gospel is established and
its doctrines freely taught, we can
hardly find an instance of faith arising
on the foundation of its evidence,
where at least the principal laws of
christianity are not known. The evi-
dence and the duties of christianity are
instilled

instilled together ; nay it often happens, SECT.
V.
 that the duties are taught, and generally understood, where the evidence hath been very little attended to. It is not therefore so easy to observe amongst ourselves their natural order and dependence on each other. But at the first preaching of christianity circumstances were widely different. The strongest evidences of our Saviour's divine mission were then frequently displayed, where his doctrines were little known. Every miracle had its converts ; nothing being more common in the history of our Lord, than after the account of a miracle to hear that many believed on him. But such converts could not be instructed in the laws of christianity, though they had been eye-witnesses of its evidence. And such at first were the Apostles themselves. For our Lord lived and died, rose again and gave full proof of his resurrection, and thereby compleated the evidence of the gospel before the laws of the gospel were fully revealed,

SECT. even to the Apostles themselves. Though
V. these first disciples of christianity therefore might have the firmest faith in their Redeemer, yet this faith could not enable them in all respects to live up to the duties of christianity, since those duties were but imperfectly known.

The impulse of faith then cannot of itself be sufficient to produce good works, without a knowledge of those divine laws by which our works are to be formed. Faith of itself cannot give us a knowledge of the will of God, and therefore cannot enable us of itself to walk according to that will. Faith gives us the disposition to obey. The act of obedience must be regulated by the rule of obedience, which is the will of God. Faith is the principle of obedience, and not the rule.

3. The manner in which faith is connected with good works is clearly pointed out to us in one short expression

fion of St. Paul which hath been already mentioned. "Faith which worketh, " or obtaineth its proper effect, by " love:" is the Apostle's expreffion. Faith or a firm belief of our Redeemer's goodness, mercy, and unspeakable love to us, enkindles in us a fervent love for him, which love must lead to a ready compliance with his will in all things. Faith therefore worketh by the intervention of love to the production of good works. And love is a free and generous principle, fitted to a free and moral agent.

SECT.

V.

Lastly, Against this opinion we appeal to experience. If the operation of faith be supposed necessary, it must of consequence be universal: and good works as its necessary effect must be inseparable from it. For it is supposed that nothing depends on the concurrence or will of the agent, but that the principle is certain in its operation, and never liable to be defeated by any perverseness of man's disposition.

SECT. tion. It must therefore influence every
V. part of our conduct alike. The faithful must be uniformly and invariably good, free from all sin, and superior to all temptation.

Thus will the believer be taken out of a state of probation; being secured against all the dangers of temptation by the force of the principle within him. How repugnant this theory is to the true state of religion in the best of christians, an appeal to their own experience will best determine. Do they find themselves every where absolutely superior to the world, never moved by temptation, or in fact never overcome by it? Are no labours of their own required, no watchfulness over themselves? Do they experience no conflict, no trial, no relapse? Do they find that faith over-rules the freedom of their will to evil, and renders them necessarily good? They who pretend this must be confuted whenever they consult their own breasts.

If

If they are hardy enough to assert SECT.
V.
thus much, their own actions will bear
the strongest evidence against them,
and prove to all the world, without
want of charity we may assert it of
the best of men, that they are not ne-
cessarily good.

But farther. If faith is supposed to
produce good works necessarily, then
there could be no degrees of christian
goodness. Faith must produce its full
effect instantly, and must raise the
believer at once to the sublimest pitch
of virtue. In that case, since there
could only be one grand division of
mankind into the faithful and the in-
fidel, whilst the latter were abandoned
to every vice of corrupted nature, the
former would be not only all virtuous,
but all equally virtuous. Thus one
half of the world would be all light
and goodness, whilst the other half
would be under one universal blot of
darkness. But we find in fact in the
christian world all the intermediate
shades

SECT. V. shades between the two extreams of purest light and total darkness: we find in the characters of mankind all possible intermixtures of light and shade, all degrees of goodness, varied from the reluctant performances of the first returning sinner, to the perfection of the saint. A fact which is absolutely inconsistent with the supposition of faith working all its effects necessarily, since it must then work them universally, and every where alike. The variety of christian characters then is totally irreconcilable to this theory of faith. It is a fact which can only be accounted for by admitting that we are free in the use of faith as of every other gift; and that this inward principle of goodness, when lodged in the heart, is improveable by us in proportion to that attention we give to it, and to our industry in the work of religion; or declines and sinks to decay, like every other talent, by our neglect of it.

The

The result of all is, that the operation of faith is not necessary and mechanical, but that it works within us to the production of good works by such a tendency as is consistent with the nature of man, and leaves his free-agency inviolate. It operates strongly by motives of the most powerful kind, but not irresistably so as to over-power the will and destroy its freedom.

SECT.

V.

Thus is the way cleared for our third enquiry, "What are the full effects of faith upon the mind, where it is duly cultivated and improved." An enquiry which cannot fail of opening to us a field of much pleasing contemplation, as it will lead us to take a view of our nature breaking forth from its corrupt state, rising fast towards perfection, and cloathed in its best attainments.

But before we proceed to this, I shall beg leave to point out in a few words

SECT. words the use and importance of the
V. doctrine which hath been just esta-
blished.

They who suppose faith to produce good works necessarily, must be led to rest entirely in faith, and this being once acquired to acquiesce in it without any farther views, and to relax and suspend all endeavours after improvement in goodness. And this accounts for their conduct when both in their writings and public exhortations they dwell altogether on faith alone, and very rarely enter on the subject of good works. A conduct which must indeed be right, if the principle which they go upon were right, that good works are the natural and necessary production of faith.

But if this theory of faith is wrong; if faith depends for its full effect, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, on the free-will of man, then we see the necessity of our own care and diligence

diligence in cultivating this principle of faith. We see in the strongest light the necessity of extending this care and vigilance unabated through the whole time of our probation here; of studying the scriptures, not only as a rule of faith, but as the only rule of life; aiming still at higher attainments in virtue, never vainly flattering ourselves, at any period of this life, that
“ we have already attained, or are already perfect;” but, in a word, “for-
“ getting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those
“ things which are before, of pressing onward toward the mark, for
“ the prize of the high calling of
“ GOD in JESUS CHRIST.”

SECT.

V.

SECTION

SECTION VI.

Of the operation of faith.

SECT. VI. **I**N enquiring into the effects of faith upon the mind, and the changes which it must there produce where it is duly cultivated and improved, we have all the data to proceed upon that we can desire. We know the nature of faith, and we know the constitution of the mind. We have nothing to do but attend to the result which must arise from the application of the one to the other, to watch the operation, and to observe the effect.

Had our minds remained in their state of original perfection, even then the introduction of so new a principle into a system of affections, passions, and the several intellectual powers, could not have failed of producing
great

great changes in it. The difficulty however would have been less to have given a right direction to a mind rightly constituted. But our whole mental system was disordered. Our understanding was darkened, our will enslaved, and our affections attached to unworthy objects. Virtue had lost that influence over our minds which was originally given to it. No longer was it able, by its own force, to retain us in that regular course of duty in which we were appointed to move. We began to deviate from it, to break the harmony of our system, and to fly off from our central light. Virtue hath therefore been supplied with new powers. The Sun of Righteousness hath lent it all his beams, and hath given it a brightness which it never knew before.

It is not easy to give us, who were born to the full enjoyment of the gospel, a strong and adequate idea of the value of a blessing which we have

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always

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SECT. always possessed. Its superiority was
VI. more clearly seen at the first appearance of christianity, when it could be contrasted on one hand with the gross ignorance of the vulgar heathen, and on the other with that feeble lamp of philosophy, wherein was collected however all the light that could be supplied from all the sources of human reason. To a world in this situation, to a people "who walked in darkness, and dwelt in the land of the shadow of death," how astonishing must have been the first appearance of this great light! We who never walked in darkness are less sensible of this effect; we see this great light without being struck by it, because the full blaze of day did not burst all at once around our understanding.

It will be necessary therefore to consider more distinctly the various ways by which the christian faith applies
itself

itself to the human mind for its improvement. SECT.
VI.

And first of all, it begins its operations by enlightening the understanding, and by pouring into it streams of celestial knowledge. We now become "acquainted with God," and obtain a more enlarged view of the divine nature and perfections. Reason indeed, properly exercised on the creation, could not fail to see many of those rays, which beaming from the Creator were reflected from his works. Such of the divine perfections as had been exerted in the creation could never lie hid: since the creation itself was perpetually bearing its testimony to them, and all its parts were for ever telling to every beholder, the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of Him who framed them. But the creation itself, though a fair transcript of the divine perfections, was still an imperfect one. Could we suppose it possible that we could look through

SECT. all nature, and could discern every
VI. character of wisdom that the Almighty
hath impressed on every part of this
system, our conceptions of the divine
perfections would no doubt be exalted
in proportion as our prospect of his
glorious works was more extended.
But even then our knowledge of the
eternal Creator would not so far sur-
pass that degree of knowledge which
we now imbibe from seeing only a
part of his works, as it would fall
short of that which we shall one day
obtain from a view of systems still
more glorious. The works of God
can only convey to our understandings
an image of so much perfection as
hath been stamped upon them. But
our creation is far too narrow to re-
ceive a compleat impression of the Di-
vinity. When we shall have heard
all that this creation can tell us of
God, we shall have heard only a
small part of all that God is.

From

From what we see at present of SECT. VI.
created excellence we justly infer the VI.
infinite perfection of the Creator him-
self. But we are mistaken if we ima-
gine that for this reason our concep-
tions of this perfection can never be
raised higher. There is room for in-
finite discoveries in the divine nature
beyond all that we can at present
conceive: and if we suppose our pow-
ers of mental vision to be growing
and enlarging through all eternity, still
they would be unable to take in that
great object which no created mind
can fully comprehend. Where indeed
can be the impropriety, since it hath
been demonstrated that there is in na-
ture a series of infinites descending
and decreasing beyond all assignable
bounds, where can be the impropriety
of saying, that we shall discover an
endless ascending progression of infinite
perfection rising beyond infinite perfec-
tion in the divine nature? So that, that
conception of infinite perfection which
the most exalted human understand-

SECT. VI. ing can embrace, falls infinitely short of that which fills the glowing breast of the highest Seraph: and yet the glowing conceptions of the highest Seraph fall still infinitely farther below what God himself is.

We cannot wonder then to be told, that Redemption hath made farther discoveries of the divine nature than creation had made. In that first work, glorious as it was, the Deity was far from being wholly put forth. Even those divine attributes which were most clearly and distinctly seen in the works of the creation, have acquired new light in the progress of redemption; and others have been discovered of which the creation gave us no intelligence.

Of all the divine attributes, the power of the Creator was that which arose at first in its fullest orb. For we cannot conceive an higher exertion of power, than that of producing
a cre-

a creation out of nothing. Yet those acts of power which have been exerted in the course of redemption, if not equal to this first act, are at least to us strong and necessary confirmations of it. Had things proceeded for ever in one uniform and unvaried course, it might have given some colour to the opinion of those who dream of the eternity of the universe, and fancy that the machine is kept in motion by some power inherent in itself. But when we see all nature bending before the giver of this new dispensation, and submitting all its established laws to his will, these wonderful operations shew clearly from whence all its power is derived. He whom nature obeys, must be NATURE'S GOD. These extraordinary appearances are acts of submission and homage which the several parts of the universe pay to their Lord, whereby they acknowledge themselves his creatures, and proclaim to all the world that "Power belongeth unto God."

SECT.
VI.

SECT. VI. Wisdom is another attribute of the Deity, which manifests itself clearly in the works of the creation. It is written on all the productions of nature, and is fully displayed in the harmony and fair proportions of every part of the universe, and the grandeur of the whole design. Yet doth wisdom break forth with additional lustre in the work of redemption. With what amazement do we look back on this glorious plan rising and encreasing in remotest ages, and brought to perfection by ways as far above the wisdom of man to contrive, as above his power to execute! And how adorable is that wisdom which laid the foundation and established the laws of the Messiah's kingdom, and again brought light and order out of darkness and confusion in the moral system, as it had before done in the natural!

If we look round all the Creator's works, we can no where find an instance of his power exerted without his

SECT.
VI.

his wisdom, nor of his wisdom without his goodness. It is the harmony and perpetual union of these attributes, every where co-operating to the same great end, that is our best and clearest proof of the divine unity. The Goodness of the Creator is manifested in the ample provision he hath made for the happiness of all his creatures, by adapting all the wonderful productions of his wisdom and power in the material world, to the uses of the living creation; and making all the rich furniture of inanimate nature subservient to some enjoyment of sense or intelligence. But in redemption goodness rises above itself, and is exalted into the new attribute of mercy; which, to all the blessings of creation, hath added that last and supreme gift of heaven, the forgiveness of sins. In the creation there was no room for the exercise of this attribute, and therefore we find no proof of it there. Mercy is the peculiar discovery and the glory of the gospel, through every
page

SECT. page of which it sheds its saving in-

VI.

fluence. Indeed neither justice nor mercy could find an object in an innocent world. It was on a world involved in guilt and misery that they first met: and when we were sinking into ruin and overwhelmed with despair, then it was that they descended from heaven, holding forth to our view that Roll of salvation whereon was inscribed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men." Then did "mercy and truth meet together;" the *mercy* of God interposing to save the sinful race of men, was reconciled with his *truth* which stood engaged to execute the sentence of death upon them: then did "righteousness and peace kiss each other;" the closest connection took place, where there seemed to be the strongest opposition, between the *righteousness* of God and the *peace* of man.

We are farther instructed by the christian faith in the true condition of
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our situation here, and the laws of
our nature and our duty are laid be-
fore us in the fullest and clearest man-
ner: laws so equitable that even the
adversaries of revelation have ever ac-
knowledged their excellence; laws so
wisely framed, and so well adapted to
our nature, that when speculative men
have undertaken to build their systems
of morality, and have furnished them
with riches borrowed liberally from
the treasures of revelation, they have
been apt to mistake the dictates of
inspiration, for the deductions of their
own reason.

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VI.

But we are not only instructed in
whatever concerns our duty or our
happiness here: our understandings are
led forth into a future state, all eter-
nity is unveiled before us, and we
see the great doctrines of life and im-
mortality in the clearest light. The
gospel hath laid open to our view
those bright eternal fields, the prospect
of which must otherwise have been for
ever

SECT. VI. ever intercepted by clouds impenetrable to the human eye. The utmost labours of the human understanding, where the most select geniuses of every enlightened age united all their efforts, could do little towards this great discovery. They could do no more than the assistance of art hath enabled the eye to do in surveying the starry firmament. The ablest reason in its utmost cultivation could just discern a faint light streaming through that dark expanse of night with which it was surrounded, from whence it might conjecture that there was a brighter world beyond. But this was a light too fine and dubious to be of any service to the vulgar sight, and which every passing cloud concealed even from the philosophic eye. The philosopher could exult in the pleasing theory of immortal happiness, but it generally failed even him when it was to be brought to the proof. Whereas the faith of a christian is a fixed and a steady light, which never deserts him, but shines

shines the brightest in the darkest seasons of distress. SECT. VI.

It is the peculiar happiness of this dispensation that all this knowledge is made level to the meanest capacity. So that we may truly affirm, that the knowledge of all the sages of antiquity put together, is no more to be compared to that knowledge which is now in the power of the humblest christian, than the glimmering of a thousand stars to a sun-beam. A fact of so astonishing a nature, and ever before our eyes, is a public and a standing proof of the reality of that revelation in which we believe, and is alone sufficient to silence all gainsayers. It is a proof of the strongest kind, demonstrating the cause from its visible and lasting effects. The effect cannot be denied: it cannot be denied that since the æra of the gospel, vulgar christianity hath excelled learned paganism in the most sublime and important branches of knowledge; nor is it possible

SECT. possible to account for this effect on
VI. any other supposition, than that there
was at that æra a revelation from heaven, a new communication of divine knowledge, a light derived from above to lighten the Gentiles.

But the action of faith upon the mind is not confined to the understanding. That light which enters in by the understanding beams into every part of the soul, and revives and invigorates all its other powers. Like the light of heaven, it brings with it a vital heat which warms the affections.

The influence which the understanding hath over the affections, is well known: and it is generally by seducing the understanding that vice maintains its dominion over us. Did we see clearly the true nature, and the different events of virtue and vice, our affections could not be so misplaced as they usually are. Religion shews us both: it shews us the naked deformity

deformity of vice, the poison that is mixed with its sweet intoxicating draught of pleasure, and the ruin in which its flowery paths terminate. It shews us the native charms of virtue, its manly and rational joys, and those pure streams of eternal pleasures by which it dwells for ever.

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It would carry us far beyond our bounds to enter into every particular, and to shew how favourable the christian faith is to the production and encrease of every virtue. It will be sufficient briefly to shew how powerful an influence it hath in maintaining within us those two great principles of all virtue, the love of God, and the love man.

The more we know of God, the more clearly we discover the justice of the Apostle's description that "GOD IS LOVE." The whole of his works is but one grand demonstration, his various dispensations are but so many successive

SECT. successive proofs rising one above another, of this great truth. All that we see in the creation are but varied expressions of his goodness, and all our enjoyments testimonies of love. They naturally therefore raise our minds to heaven. Wherever our affections may begin, they terminate in the Creator; and if they rest for a while on his works, it is only to gain strength that they may renew their flight upwards to the Giver of all good gifts.

But redemption takes up the tale which creation had begun, and in a language still more awakening, still infinitely more affecting, repeats to us the heavenly strain that "GOD IS LOVE." Not content to have created an universe on purpose to bear witness to this, he sends the Lord of the universe himself to give us in person the strongest assurances of it. His own eternal son vouchsafes to bring the commendations of his Father's love towards us. He veils the brightness of his glory which

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we could not directly look upon, by SECT.
VI.
 cloathing himself in our own nature; and softens the splendor of Divinity to the bearing of our sight, by tempering it with the milder rays of human virtue: that thus we might have for our imitation an example of perfection nearer to our own standard, and might receive expressions of divine love in the tenderest language of human affection.—— But ah! what pledge of love is this which he is preparing to give, and what characters are these in which we see it written! What voice is that, which in the midst of the bitterest sufferings, and the most cruel tortures, speaks only of mercy and forgiveness! Why is he thus extended on the cross, why is his visage stained with those drops of blood, and why flows that purple stream from his side! —— Ah! this is the great work of atonement; and he is now expiating the sins of a guilty world! Hear, oh! heavens, and give ear, oh earth! He dies for those

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by

SECT. by whom he dies: and that very
VI. blood which mankind hath shed, was
poured forth to testify his love of
man!

Such are the wonderful measures that God hath taken to engage our affections. And if we can feel all these blessings without any returns of gratitude on our part; if we, who were first raised from nothing into existence, and then again snatched from misery, and lifted to the hopes of immortal happiness, if we can forget the hand which did these great things for us, nor feel the love of God glowing in our breasts; then will the whole creation bear witness against us, that creation which hath in vain borne continual witness of the love of God towards us: then will that blood of our Redeemer also cry loudly against us; that blood which hath been in vain poured out for us.

With

With regard to our love of mankind, were we to recall every argument for our mutual affection that the gospel supplies us with, we must transcribe the gospel. It will be sufficient to urge the force of that general conclusion of the Apostle, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Here we see the Apostle brings the whole weight of those considerations which arise from the divine love displayed in redemption, directly to enforce our love of each other, and makes all that hath been advanced in support of the love of God, an argument for our love of man. They are indeed kindred affections which open into and communicate with each other: and that love of God which springs up continually, and overflows in the heart of the true christian, feeds and maintains to an equal height the fountain of human love. For if we love our Redeemer, we must for our Redeemer's sake love mankind. It was not

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SECT. for some select few alone, it was not
VI. for some favourite sect or party, it was
not for some peculiar people that our Lord died, but for the whole race of sinful men. He gave his life a ransom for many, and nothing less than a world was a fit object of his redeeming love. To every individual therefore amongst mankind the force of the Apostle's general conclusion is clearly applicable. Beloved, if God so loved *him* as to send his only begotten son into the world, to be the propitiation of *his* sins, surely then we are bound by the strongest obligations to love him likewise. For if there is any one man, how mean, how miserable, how contemptible soever he may seem; if there is any one whom we dare to think unworthy of our love, we thereby have the presumption to oppose our opinion to that of our Saviour, who hath declared him not unworthy of his. Oh you then, who harbour in your breasts any dark and unfriendly passion; you who listening
only

only to the dictates of resentment, are preparing for your brother the whole weight of your revenge: look up before you execute your fatal purpose; look through those mists of passion with which you are now blinded, and behold him whom you were about to strike encircled in the arms of your Redeemer!

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So powerfully doth redemption strengthen all the bonds of mutual affection between us, exalting benevolence into charity and brotherly love.

Having thus laid the foundation of all social virtues, faith proceeds no less effectually to provide for the security of those which more immediately respect ourselves. For we cannot have a nobler motive to engage us in the cultivation of all personal virtues, than the consciousness of that dignity and worth to which our nature is now exalted. Had we been to die for ever, and after a few years

SECT. of precarious being here, to sink into the
VI. earth, and to mingle with our native
dust, never more to be awakened to
life or sense, the wisest thing we could
have done would have been to crowd
into our short span of existence all
the enjoyments we could meet with.
But redemption hath set us free from
the hard laws of mortality after sub-
mitting to them for a while, and hath
begotten us again unto a lively hope
of eternal happiness. We are born
to the highest expectations, and there
is no degree of excellence which we
may not aspire after in that endless
progress of improvement to which we
are destined. And shall beings of that
high rank to which we now belong,
shall the sons of immortality, and the
heirs of an heavenly kingdom, stoop
to seek their happiness in common
with the brutes that perish, amongst low
carnal indulgences and sensual plea-
sures? It would be the height of
baseness as well as folly, thus to de-
grade our souls for which our Saviour
paid

paid so high a price, to sacrifice eternity to a moment, for a few drops of fugitive and deceitful pleasure to give up those rivers of pleasure at God's right hand which shall never be exhausted, or for any bribe that this world can offer to resign our right to that inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us.

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VI.

After gaining so considerable a part of the mind, the remainder will be easy, to subdue the will also to the service of virtue, and thereby to restore it to its freedom. For what the understanding approves, and the affections embrace, will not easily be rejected by the will. All the motives that have been received into the mind by them, are prepared and disposed by them to act upon the will with the greatest force. When virtue appears to the mind in all those advantages which it derives from revelation, in all that celestial light and beauty which

SECT. shine through the understanding, and
VI. command the affections, the will re-
mains no longer in suspense, but yields
itself entirely to the heavenly at-
traction.

That the assent of the will should follow the other faculties of the mind, and should give way to the same powerful application of faith by which they had been before gained, must appear very natural. But it may not perhaps be so readily understood, how by this means the will is restored to its freedom. To comprehend this effect it must be observed, that the will of man is not a detached and independent power, whose business it is to act alone, and to move merely for the sake of its own motion. It is in a state of the closest connection with the other powers of the mind, upon which it acts, and is reciprocally acted upon by them. It concurs in all their operations, and unites in the minutest movements of every part of the mind.

Hence

Hence what we call the freedom of the will, may perhaps be as well expressed by, the freedom of the whole mind. At least the freedom of the will implies thus much, and may perhaps be better comprehended by some when thus expressed.

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VI.

It follows, that in order to maintain the freedom of the will, the whole mind must be well adjusted and duly regulated : and if any of its powers are disturbed, the freedom of the will, that is, the ease and free motion of the mind is necessarily impeded. The disorder does not terminate in that part where it began, but on account of the general influence of all the parts on each other, spreads in some measure through the whole frame, and is immediately communicated to the will, whose exercise depends on the free use of every part. If the understanding, for instance, is wholly unenlightened and sunk in ignorance, you may suppose if you please, the will to be

SECT. VI. be perfect in itself, and to retain its own power of free motion: but what can be the use of such a power, where it is constantly in danger of being misled by its false views of every object? In this state it resembles a prisoner set at liberty in profound darkness, who is then indeed able to move freely, but the next step he takes may as well lead him to a precipice, as into the path which he wants to pursue. The same holds with still greater force as to the affections. The affections are much stronger principles of action than the understanding, and operate with more violence. If therefore they are not under a due regulation; but are attached to low and unworthy objects, the will must necessarily receive a wrong bias from them, and be drawn blindly after them. If again the understanding and the affections are at variance with each other, the whole mind is then in a state of distraction and tumult. All its powers instead of concurring in one general operation,
act

act in opposition to each other, and thereby clog and retard each others motions. The will makes some faint effort, some ineffectual struggles for liberty; but the event generally is, that the strongest power prevails at last: the passions grow impetuous, and bear down all before them; they cloud and absorb the light of the understanding, and drag the will after them in chains.

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This effect of vice and corruption is thus beautifully pictured by Solomon.
“ His own iniquities shall take the
“ wicked, and he shall be holden
“ with the cords of his sins.”^a

As the liberty of the will is lost by disorders arising in the other powers of the mind, so it can be no otherwise restored than by reducing those powers into order. And this is the effect which, as we have seen,
faith

^a Prov. v. 22.

SECT. faith produces on the mind. On the
VI. introduction of that heavenly principle, the ferment of the soul subsides, all its jarring powers are reconciled, and that union restored amongst them which is necessary to its liberty and perfection. The mind of man in its fallen state resembles an admirable machine out of order. Those finer springs and movements which were formed to obey the touch of virtue, were all injured and disturbed; so that it required some new regulating power, some additional impulse to put them in motion. Faith is that regulating power, which retouches this admirable machine, and gives it again its free and natural motion.

This whole doctrine is stated in the clearest manner by our blessed Lord himself, in a discourse which he held with some Jews that had believed on him ^b. The influence which the
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^b John, chapter viii.

understanding hath in restoring the liberty of the will is expressly pointed out by him in these words: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The Jews, supposing him to speak of a release from civil bondage, answered with a warmth proceeding from a jealousy of their civil liberties, "We be Abraham's seed: we were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou then, ye shall be made free?" Our Lord then explains his meaning clearly, and tells them that he spake of moral and spiritual liberty, which is lost by sin, and can only be restored in its highest perfection by the power of religion. "Whosoever committeth sin, saith he, is the servant of sin: but if the Son shall make you free, then shall ye be free indeed."

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Upon the whole, the natural operation of faith upon the mind, is to enlighten the understanding, to recall the affections into their proper channel,
and

SECT. and to break those fetters by which
VI. the will was held in bondage. It in-
sinuates itself into every part of the
mind, circulates its healing virtues
through the whole extent of the soul,
and thereby restores health to its con-
stitution.

I shall conclude this part of my sub-
ject by pointing out in a few words one
strong character of distinction which
meets us here, between our true re-
ligion, and that prevailing enthusiasm
which is only an unhappy abuse of it.

Enthusiasm confines the action of
faith upon the soul chiefly to one part
of it, neither admitting in religion the
use of the understanding, nor the ex-
ercise of the free will. By which
scheme it both dishonours our holy
faith, by thus narrowing and contract-
ing its influence, and instead of heal-
ing the natural disorders of the soul,
fixes and confirms them. Instead of
exalting the understanding, it degrades
that

that heaven-born faculty, and chains it down to the earth, holding it unworthy of assisting in divine things. Instead of vindicating and restoring the liberty of the will, by reducing it to a passive subjection under certain irresistible feelings and impulses, it doth in reality load it with a double chain. Principles, which are so far from reducing the mind into a state of composure and union, that they tend only to unhinge it still more than ever, and leave it in a state of the utmost distraction, by placing its powers in opposition to each other, and raising one in a most extraordinary and unnatural manner above the rest. I wish that this were speculation only, and that experience did not too manifestly confirm what has been here advanced, concerning that distraction and disorder of mind to which these principles lead.

Enthusiasm indeed warms the affections, and kindles them often to an
uncom-

SECT.
VI.
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SECT. uncommon degree of fervour. But

VI. the heat of enthusiasm is the heat of disease, which enflames a part only, and thereby weakens and consumes the mind, instead of giving strength to it.

Observe then the superiority of that religion of the gospel, whose genuine operations upon the mind we have been attempting to describe, over this defective and partial plan. The genial warmth of true religion diffuses itself equally through the whole frame of the mind, and imparts life and vigour wherever it is felt. This genial warmth not only glows in the affections, but awakens to new life every faculty of the soul, and calls them forth to unite all their powers in the service of him, whose wisdom first gave being to the harmonious composition of the human soul, and when it had unhappily fallen into disorder, whose mercy contrived the means of raising it again from its ruins, and exalting it to

to more than its first perfection. In SECT.
a word, the religion of a true christian, VI.
is "the religion of his reason, the re-
" ligion of his affections, and the re-
" ligion of his will."

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SECTION

SECTION VII.

*Of Regeneration.*SECT.
VII.

IF we call to mind the powerful effects of faith upon the soul, where it is duly cultivated and improved; how it enlightens the understanding, regulates the affections, and restores the freedom of the will: if we add to this the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit co-operating to the same great end: we cannot be at a loss to comprehend those various expressions of the new testament which represent the soul, when restored to that perfection to which it may be carried under the christian dispensation, as the peculiar workmanship of God, as in a state of new birth, or of a new creation.

But as this doctrine of christianity hath been often grossly misunderstood, and this is the peculiar region of our
holy

holy faith, where enthusiasm seems to think itself most securely established; SECT. VII.
let us endeavour in the

First place, to obtain a clear and distinct notion of christian regeneration. And then we shall discern

Secondly, how naturally it leads us to the practice of good works: that being the grand aim of the whole christian institution; that being the very end and design, as we are expressly assured by St. Paul, of this our new creation, for “we are God’s workmanship, faith the Apostle, “created in Christ Jesus unto good “works.”^a

In the first place let us endeavour to obtain a clear and distinct notion of christian regeneration.

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Now

^a Eph. ii. 10.

SECT. VII. Now by this, and other expressions in scripture of equal force, it is evident, that we must understand in general that change which is wrought in the mind by those powers which in the christian dispensation are made to act upon it. A change, as we have already seen, from darkness to light, from confusion to order, from slavery to freedom. The tendency of faith to produce this change hath been fully considered. The Holy Spirit, we are assured, concurs in all these operations of faith. “ For it is by the Spirit of
“ wisdom that our understandings are
“ enlightened : it is by the Spirit that
“ we are rooted and grounded in love ;
“ and that our souls are purified in
“ obeying the truth : it is by the Spirit
“ that we are called unto liberty, for
“ where the Spirit of the Lord is,
“ there is liberty : in a word, it
“ is by the Spirit that all our infir-
“ mities are helped, and that we are
“ strength-

“ strengthened with might in the inner
“ man ^b.”

SECT.
VII.

It follows clearly then that the great change we speak of is produced in the mind by the concurring operation of faith and the Holy Spirit. The united agency of this inward and this outward power, enables the soul gradually to throw off its corruption, and works it into an holy and an heavenly frame. It receives from our holy faith the purest principles of virtue, at the same time that it receives from the Spirit the ability and disposition to act up to those principles.

There are three expressions which are in their turns made use of by St. Paul to signify the virtue of the christian dispensation, as opposed to the inefficacy of ritual observances. “ Neither circumcision availeth any thing, faith
N 3 “ he,

^b Eph. i. 17. 1 Pet. i. 22. Gal. v. 13.
2 Cor. iii. 17. Rom. viii. 26. Eph. iii. 16, 17.

SECT. "he, nor uncircumcision, but faith
 VII. "working by love—but a new crea-
 ~~~~~  
 "ture—but keeping the command-  
 "ments of God." \* These three ex-  
 pressions therefore being in their turns  
 opposed to the same thing, must be  
 equivalent, pointing out the power of  
 the christian dispensation by three of  
 its capital parts. The first of these,  
 "faith working by love," denotes the  
 efficient cause, or operating power: the  
 second, "a new creature," the inward  
 change in disposition and principle  
 wrought by that power: the third,  
 "keeping the commandments of God,"  
 the outward change of action and con-  
 duct, which is the result of that in-  
 ward change of mind and principle,  
 and the ultimate and final effect of faith.

Here then we have a compleat re-  
 presentation of the christian life. We  
 see it in its first principles, in its in-  
 ternal

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\* Gal. v. 6,—vi. 15. 1 Cor. vii. 19.

ternal constitution, and in a state of action. SECT.  
VII.

Life implies much more than mere existence. It implies the use of those vital powers and principles which belong to each several order of beings, and without which they would exist to no purpose. When we speak of life therefore, the term must vary according to the rank of being to which it is applied. It must have a greater, or a less compass of meaning as we speak of beings formed for nobler or for lower purposes. Life in beings endowed with sense alone, must mean the sensitive life only. But in beings, who have spirit and intelligence added to sense, it implies more; it implies the exercise of those superior, spiritual, and intellectual powers. If man then, neglecting all his nobler faculties, should confine himself entirely to the use and enjoyment of the animal functions, he can no longer be said to enjoy the life of man, but sinks himself down to the

SECT. level of mere animal life. But if again,  
VII. in this degraded state, he should recover the use of his better faculties, he then rises once more to the human and intellectual life.

Upon these principles it is that our sacred writers proceed when they everywhere speak of virtue as the life of the human soul, and of sin as its death. "To be carnally minded is death : " but to be spiritually minded is life " and peace." How just is this language, and with what propriety do they represent the life formed on christian principles as a new life, and the man who embraces those principles as born to new life, and becoming a new creature ! For surely man, whose soul is illuminated with all the glorious light, and strengthened with all the powers of christianity ; man, whose actions are formed on the sublimest principles, whom the purest virtue conducts to the most exalted happiness ; man, reaching forward to the perfection of his nature,



nature, and grasping immortality : must be different from man sunk in ignorance and error, from man groveling on the earth, and never raising his eyes above its surface, but going round and round its narrow circle in a vain search of happiness which cannot be found. Surely man moving aloft in the christian system, is a being of an higher order, than man moving in the broken system of fallen nature.

SECT.  
VII.  


Such is the clear account of that regeneration, or state of new life, of which the gospel speaks : in which every thing appears founded on reasons of the strictest propriety, and than which nothing can be more easily comprehended. But are there not men to whom it will seem too clear, and who are displeased with every attempt to free the doctrines of the gospel from that obscurity in which they love to behold them? Men who seem weary of that dispensation of light under which we have the happiness

SECT. pinefs to live, and willing to retire  
VII. back again amongst the types and  
~~~~~ shadows of the Mosaic institution?  
Such men seem to speak and write as if they were persuaded that the christian regeneration implied the actual creation and infusion of a new soul. An opinion which a moment's reflection will shew to be alike rejected by reason and revelation.

For if this idea were just, and if a christian were a new creature in the most literal sense of the expression, then in the instant of this new creation all the former furniture and endowments of his mind must be swept away, all traces of his former knowledge must be obliterated, and the memory of them entirely blotted out. The new convert would stand like Adam amidst the new creation, without any ideas but such as had been immediately stamped upon his mind by the hand of his creator. But that this is the case of the regenerate I suppose no one will

will be bold enough to affirm. Should it, in contradiction to sense and experience be affirmed, yet can it never be reconciled with that duty of repentance which the gospel requires from all its converts, and which evidently supposes a retrospect into the actions of their former life, of which they must therefore retain the remembrance, and for which the present man is accountable.

SECT.
VII.

If in the act of regeneration there were really the infusion of a new soul, as they who contend for the literal acceptance of the expressions, *a new creature*, and *a new birth*, must suppose, then must that soul be allowed to come spotless out of the hands of its Creator. In this case, it must either continue in a state of sinless purity, a condition which it is to be feared would exclude all mankind from the title of regenerate, and which can neither be reconciled with the experience of the best christians, nor with
the

SECT. the continual admonitions of scripture
VII. to amendment and repentance; or if
it should fall from that purity, it must
itself stand as much in need of redemption as the former polluted soul; that is, according to this notion of redemption, of being again supplied by a new soul; and so a succession of souls in the same man would take place.

Indeed this literal acceptance of the new birth is utterly inconsistent with the very idea of a redemption. The creation of a new soul is an act of infinite power alone, to which the death of a redeemer seems to have no relation. His death could be no more necessary to such an act of infinite power, to the creation of a new soul at this time, than it would have been at the first creation of things. Redemption necessarily implies the redemption of the sinful and polluted soul, of that very soul which had lost its created purity, and forfeited its first happiness.

happiness. And we see the wonderful propriety, we feel the efficacy of a Saviour's dying to promote this great end. Agreeable to this is the language of scripture, which every where speaks of redemption as a purifying and an healing act; and of those who enjoy the benefit of it as in a state of restoration and recovery.

SECT.
VII.

But may not this restoration and recovery be the instantaneous effect of the Holy Spirit's operation on the soul? To judge how far regeneration may be an instantaneous act, we must call to mind that connection which hath already been taken notice of between the influence of the Spirit and the influence of faith. The purifying and healing of the soul is the effect of their joint action. And since the progress of faith through the soul must be gradual, it seems to follow clearly, that this effect of their joint action must be progressive likewise.

Our

SECT. VII. Our blessed Lord in that pathetic discourse delivered to his disciples just before his passion drew on, and the glorious address to his Father with which it is concluded, clearly points out the means by which the conversion and sanctification of the world were to be carried on. With regard to the apostles themselves, he affirms, that even “ they were made clean “ through the word which he had “ spoken unto them. I have given “ unto them the words which thou, “ O Father, gavest me ; and they have “ received them, and have known “ surely that I came out from thee, “ and they have believed that thou “ didst send me. Sanctify them, he “ adds afterwards, through thy truth : “ thy word is truth. As thou hast “ sent me into the world, even so “ have I also sent them into the “ world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be “ sanctified through the truth. Neither “ pray I for these alone, but for them “ also

“also which shall believe on me
“through their word.” In this pas-
sage we see clearly by what channel
the stream of sanctification is derived
from our Saviour to the world. The
Apostles received from our Lord him-
self that word of divine truth, which
by their word and ministry was to be
conveyed to all mankind. Whence it
is manifest; that the external revelation
of divine truth which our Saviour hath
communicated to mankind by the in-
spired writings of his Apostles, was
given as the established means of
their conversion and sanctification.

SECT.
VII.

Since then there are two distinct
powers concerned in producing this
great change in the soul, it follows,
that they must regulate each other's
motions. Whatever therefore might
be supposed, were the enquiry only
about the secret and invisible opera-
tions of the Spirit, yet since these
operations are conducted by the known
rule of God's revealed word, we can-
not

SECT. not be at a loss how to determine
 VII. the question before us. For unless
 the whole gospel can in an instant
 be lodged in the soul, the compleat
 recovery of the soul which depends on
 the gospel cannot be instantaneous. Its
 improvement must be gradual, whilst
 under the guidance of the Spirit it
 discovers by degrees all the treasures
 of revelation, and imbibes daily more
 and more of that sanctifying truth of
 which our Lord speaks.

This corresponds exactly with the
 language of the inspired writers, who
 every where represent the christian
 life as a state of continual improvement.
 They speak of the new converts to
 christianity "as in a state of infancy,
 " as new born babes, and such as
 " have need of milk, and not of strong
 " meat:" they speak of them "as
 " growing up to maturity from this state
 " of childhood by means of that nou-
 " rishment which they receive from
 " the sincere milk of the word: as
 " adding

“ adding to their faith virtue, and to SECT.
“ virtue knowledge; as advancing VII.
“ from the first principles of the chri-
“ stian doctrine, and going on unto per-
“ fection; as growing at once in grace
“ and in the knowledge of our Lord
“ and Saviour, till at last they come
“ in the unity of the faith, and of
“ the knowledge of the Son of God,
“ unto a perfect man, unto the mea-
“ sure of the stature of the fulness
“ of Christ.”

They, therefore, who fancy that they feel a power in regeneration which instantly renews their souls, and brings them to a state of sinless perfection, and that by the sole action of the Holy Spirit, without the use or application of any external means, do but amuse themselves with visions as void of all support in sense and experience, as in the revealed word of God. For according to them, our Lord came down from heaven to teach mankind the way to salvation; he lived and died

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to

SECT. to establish amongst them that revelation which he brought from heaven;
VII.

he appointed chosen witnesses, who under the peculiar guidance of the holy Inspirer recorded this revelation for the universal good of all mankind, and sealed the record with their blood: and yet after all, the Inspirer himself sets aside the use of that word which he inspired, and by his own single and miraculous influence on the soul obtains all the ends for which the revelation was given. According to them, the Holy Spirit hath publicly established the means of grace and spiritual improvement, and yet doth privately in every particular instance render the application of those means unnecessary. According to them, the whole glorious structure of the christian dispensation, which heaven-directed men have with so much labour brought to perfection, that structure which rises on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone,
is

is a work that might well have been
pared : since instead of our receiv-
ing any support from the Apostles
and Prophets, instead of our being
formed into that building fitly framed
together, every one, according to them,
is built only on the foundation of his
own personal feelings, and guided, in-
dependently of all others, by particular
communications of the Spirit made in
secret to himself alone.

SECT.
VII.

Upon the whole; with regard to
the christian regeneration we may
venture to conclude, that the change
which the soul undergoes, is not a to-
tal and substantial change, is not the
acquisition of a new soul, but a re-
covery and restoration of its whole
frame and constitution, from sickness
and disorder to harmony and health:
that this change is produced by the
concurrent influence of faith and the
Holy Spirit; faith filling the soul with
the sublimest principles of virtue,
and the Holy Spirit disposing and ex-

SECT. citing all its powers to act according to
VII. those principles : and consequently that
the part which the Holy Spirit takes
in the work of regeneration is by no
means to inspire, by no means to in-
fuse into the soul new revelations, but
to strengthen and sustain it in fol-
lowing the light of that common re-
velation which he hath already in-
spired and promulged for the use of
all mankind.

SECTION

SECTION VIII.

Of good works.

REGENERATION being no SECT.
VIII.
 other than the entire possession
 of the soul by the principles and
 powers of christianity, whereby its
 evil dispositions are subdued, and it is
 gradually wrought into an holy and
 heavenly frame, we cannot but dis-
 cern how naturally it must lead to the
 practice of good works. Virtuous ac-
 tion is indeed the grand aim of the
 whole christian institution: it is the
 very end and design, as we are expressly
 assured by St. Paul, of our new crea-
 tion, for “we are God’s workman-
 “ ship, saith the Apostle, created in
 “ Christ Jesus unto good works ^d.”

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Were

^d Eph. ii. 10.

SECT. VIII. Were it possible in surveying the christian system not to perceive how directly it is calculated to answer this great end, we should want one of the noblest proofs which we now enjoy of the wisdom and goodness of Him who formed it. THE POWER OF MAKING US GOOD is the greatest glory of the christian dispensation; and they who would deny it this power, rob it of that jewel which shines the brightest in its heavenly crown, and fix upon it a calumny greater than its enemies have ever been able to invent against it.

The design of redemption was to restore man to that happiness which he had lost by sin. To have relieved his misery only, without taking any measures to remove his guilt, would have been removing the effect and leaving the cause in its full force again to operate the same effect. A redemption undertaken on account of sin must certainly have been aimed against

against sin itself, otherwise the enemy would be left in full possession of his conquest. To suppose that the Redeemer came only to deliver us from the punishment of sin without delivering us from its power, is to suppose that he came in fact to take away a discouragement to sin, by removing its penalty. His mercy thus confined would hardly deserve the name of mercy: it would be mercy to sense only, whilst it was denied to our nobler, our spiritual and intellectual part.

SECT.
VIII.

But these unworthy notions of redemption will not stand a moment before the light of the gospel. The very first intimation of the great design shews us that our Saviour undertook to bruise the serpent's head: that is, not only to obviate some ill effects of his power, but to destroy his power itself. To make us happy and yet to leave us under the dominion of sin, seems to be one of those contradictions which

SECT. omnipotence itself cannot effect. At
VIII. least we are assured that redemption
is very far from any attempt thus to
do violence to the nature of things,
by connecting happiness with vice,
which can only be the natural parent
of misery. Redemption goes at once
to the very source of all our sufferings,
and applies its healing virtue to cure
the soul of that disease from which
all its misery springs. Redemption acts
in perfect conformity with the first
sacred establishments of heaven; and
leads us to happiness by forming us
to the practice of virtue, the only way to
happiness that either revelation or ex-
perience have ever pointed out,

Every part of the christian dispen-
sation is manifestly adapted to answer
this great end, to train us up to the
exercise of goodness, and to qualify us
for virtuous action. For to what
other end doth our holy faith inspire
us with all its principles of virtue;
why doth it, like Moses, striking a
rock,

rock, open the fountain of divine love in our heart, and cause the love of man to spring from the love of our Redeemer; why doth it enlighten us with all its laws of heavenly goodness; why point to the bright example of a Saviour walking before us in the path of active virtue; why doth it try to move us by all the power of those awful sanctions which belong to our holy religion; why still farther, doth the Holy Spirit join his influence to that of faith, and give new strength and vigour to our souls: why are we endowed with all these principles and powers of action, if yet the christian life is not a life of action, and if all is to end only in some brisk emotion of the spirits, and some inward agitation of the mind? When "the man of God" is thus adapted and thoroughly furnished unto all good works," how strange a doctrine is that which will yet adventure to say, that he is designed for no kind of work; and when all these principles and springs of action

SECT.
VIII.

SECT. tion are in motion within him, would
VIII. at that instant fix him motionless, blast
all his powers, and freeze him as it
were into inaction! As well may we
suppose that when the Creator fashioned
this animated clay, and breathed into
it the breath of life; when he furnished
it with limbs, with nerves, joints, and
muscles, and all its numberless instru-
ments of motion, he never yet intended
that the human body should move;
as to suppose that this new work-
manship of God, created, and in every
respect furnished unto good works, was
never intended for the practice of those
works for which it is expressly formed.

The gift of the power certainly im-
plies and requires the use and right ap-
plication of that power: and that indeed
not only in the case of the finished and
enlightened christian, but universally and
in all cases, as far as the power, and
light for the direction of that power,
have been communicated.

All

All our blessed Lord's doctrines are full of precepts and motives to action. And in those beautiful parables in which his doctrines were often couched, he continually represents the christian as in a state of action. He represents him as a Servant bound to do the will of his master; as a Labourer in a vineyard; as one entrusted with a Talent which it was his duty to improve. And the other inspired writers, in perfect correspondence with their master, represent the christian life under the same kind of images, as under those of a pilgrimage, a race, and a state of warfare.

SECT.
VIII.

The very notion of a state of trial in which we are here placed, implies the necessity of forming our lives and guiding our whole conduct according to some rule by which they must be hereafter reviewed. And in our Lord's description of that grand scene by which this probationary system shall be

SECT. be closed, he hath fully assured us, that
VIII. we shall be called to a strict account for
our use of all the talents entrusted to us; and that the chief enquiry, on the event of which our eternal lot must be decided, will be, how we have obeyed the dictates of that humanity and benevolence to others with which our holy faith is calculated to inspire us. Nor need we be surpris'd that on this occasion no mention is made of faith itself, though faith is certainly prescribed as the leading condition of our salvation; since an enquiry after the fruits of faith is in effect an enquiry after faith itself: and at the same time this proceeding of our judge clearly shews us, that faith is valuable in his sight only in proportion to the fruits it produces, and the good works to which it leads us.

No one can be ignorant that there are in the holy scriptures numberless precepts of virtue, and rules, examples, and

and motives to sanctity of life. But SECT.
VIII.
to what end are they placed there, ~
if not to influence our practice? Take
away every part of scripture that does
not relate to faith, and you will re-
duce it to a very small volume. Se-
parate the rules of faith and the rules
of practice into two distinct bodies,
and you will find the latter far to
exceed the former in dimensions.
Which is easily to be accounted for,
if practice is to be our study as well
as faith. For then since faith is but
a single act, and practice extends
through every part of life, it is clearly
seen why that part of scripture should
be the most extensive, which relates to
the most extensive part of our duty. But
if we suppose, that when faith is once
acquired the christian is complealy fi-
nished, and that he is to rest in faith,
and hath no concern with works; then
it seems impossible to account for the
conduct of the Holy Spirit in saying
so much about works which do not
belong

SECT. belong to us, and contracting into so
VIII. small a size that part of scripture in
which alone we are interested.

The question in short is reduced to this, Whether it is of any consequence that we should obey our master's will or not: and whether the greatest part of the scriptures is not entirely superfluous, and all the divine commands contained in them absolutely without a meaning?

Upon the whole then we may conclude, that the design of christianity doth by no means terminate in faith, but that faith is that good tree, which by our own assiduous cultivation, and the influence of God's Holy Spirit, bringeth forth good fruit: and therefore that good works in connection with faith, and springing from that holy principle, are absolutely necessary to complete the christian character. Our Saviour is the vine, and we are the branches.

branches. If we abide in the vine, and maintain our union with it, if we abide in a faithful attachment to our Lord and Saviour, we shall derive from that sacred stock to which we belong a vital juice which will give us daily new force and vigour, and enable us to bring forth much fruit.

SECT.
VIII.

Faith shall end with time. Its whole business is answered in this life: and in heaven faith shall have no existence. But virtue shall be immortal: and that plant which in this cold region is barely kept alive by the warmth of the heavenly principle within us, shall, when it comes to its native soil, flourish without the support of faith. Surely therefore, amongst candidates for heaven, that which will for ever flourish there should be cultivated at least as much as that which will there be done away. The virtuous disposition, benevolence and charity, the love of God and the love of man, shall accompany
us

SECT. us to heaven, and become a source of
 VIII. endless bliss springing up and encreasing
 to all eternity. But when we shall
 be borne to that pure and blissful
 region on angels wings, faith shall
 then be left behind us with this pe-
 rishing world.

SECTION

SECTION IX.

Objections considered.

TO that way of explaining the christian doctrine, which having shewn the direct tendency of every part of the gospel-dispensation, and of every principle it employs to produce good works, concludes the necessity of associating good works with faith, in order to fulfil the design, and to obtain the end of our calling, some no doubt will have their objections.

SECT.

IX.

It will be proper therefore to take notice of the most considerable and most popular of those objections which may probably arise.

And first, it will be pretended, that by the doctrine of good works we assume a merit to ourselves, set up a claim to happiness founded on that

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merit,

SECT. merit, and thereby arrogantly presume
IX. to share with our Saviour in the work
of salvation.

In answer to this let it be observed, that strictly speaking there can be no merit in any created being. It can never do more than what is answerable to the powers and faculties with which it is endowed. But all its powers and faculties are the gift of the Creator; and therefore no use nor application of them can ever cancel the debt of the original gift. Strictly speaking therefore, no created being can have merit, so as to form upon it any claim of happiness from his Creator, or to entitle him to any degree of reward, otherwise than as the free gift and voluntary appointment of God himself.

Yet there may and must be amongst those creatures of God, whom he hath endowed with any degree of free-will, and a power of directing their own
conduct,

conduct, amongst such there must be a relative merit, and a comparative goodness. SECT. IX.

All actions cannot appear alike in the sight of that "God of knowledge, " who sees all our ways, and counts " all our steps; and by whom we " are assured that our actions are " weighed *." Neither therefore can all agents be equally acceptable to him.

God hath given in trust to man various powers and abilities, by a right application of which he is enabled at once to advance his own happiness, and to promote the happiness of others; or by a contrary use of them, to disturb the peace of mankind, and bring on his own ruin. For he hath linked us to each other by so strong a chain, that there is no solitary road to happiness

P 2

or

* Job xxxi. 6. and 1 Sam. ii. 3.

SECT. or misery. If we would be happy,
IX. we must seek the happiness of others ;
and if we promote the ruin of others,
we must be miserable ourselves. It is
then by the strong sanction of happiness
or misery that we are engaged in
the exercise of social virtue. And be-
cause those actions which we call vir-
tuous, are calculated to promote the
good of others, therefore they are dis-
tinguished by the name of " good
works." This therefore is not a
name which human pride idolizing its
own merit hath given them, but it is a
name founded as we see in reason,
nay more, a name by which those
actions are constantly denoted in the
sacred writings. Which renders it the
more surprizing that any one should
have the boldness, under any pretence
whatsoever, to appear against them,
since they do thereby oppose both the
authority and the language of the
gospel, which abounds with precepts
and motives to virtuous actions, un-
der

der the exprefs name of GOOD SECT.
WORKS *, IX.

P 3

In

* Because this circumstance muſt ſurely have been overlooked by thoſe who make it their buſineſs constantly to declaim againſt good works, and to diſcourage us from every attempt to perform them, by perſuading us that we are wholly unfit for the godlike exerciſe of doing good; I ſhall therefore ſubjoin a few of thoſe numerous paſſages in which good works are expreſſly recommended to our practice,

“ This is a faithful ſaying, ſays Saint Paul to Titus, and theſe things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God be careful to maintain good works.” You ſee Saint Paul directs his diſciple to *affirm constantly*, to make it the conſtant ſubject of his preaching, that all chriſtians, *all who have believed*, ſhould be careful to *maintain good works*. “ Charge them that are rich in this world,” ſays the ſame apoſtle to Timothy, another of his diſciples, whom he is inſtructing in what manner he ought to preach the goſpel, “ charge them that they do good, that they be rich in *good works*.” In his epiſtle to the Romans he aſſures us, “ that God will render to every man according to his deeds; tribulation and anguiſh upon every
“ ſoul

SECT. In the original constitution of things,
 IX. had that remained uninjured, man, by
 em-

“foul of man *that doeth evil*, but glory, honour,
 “and peace to every man *that doeth good*.” He
 exhorts us to “consider one another to provoke
 “unto love and to *good works*; and never to be
 “weary in *well-doing*, for in due season we
 “shall reap, if we faint not.”

Hear our Saviour himself, who went about
 “doing good,” that we might follow his ex-
 ample: “Let your light so shine before men,
 “that they may see your *good works*, and
 “glorify your Father which is in heaven.”
 “*Well-done*, thou good and faithful servant,”
 are the terms in which he expresses his approba-
 tion of him who had improved the talents en-
 trusted to him. “Marvel not at this,” are his
 own awful words on another solemn occasion,
 “for the hour is coming in the which all that
 “are in their graves shall hear his voice, and
 “shall come forth; they that have *done good*,
 “unto the resurrection of life; and they that
 “have *done evil*, unto the resurrection of dam-
 “nation.” So that, according to our Saviour,
 if we would obtain *the resurrection of life*, we
 must *do good*; if we *do evil*, we must be doomed
 to *the resurrection of damnation*.

Many

employing his abilities in obedience to the will of his Creator, and in promoting the good of his fellow-creatures, could not have failed of securing his own happiness. In that situation he would have obtained happiness with less assistance than what we under the gospel enjoy, and yet even then his happiness could by no means have been esteemed his own proper acquisition, or a debt due to his merit, but

SECT.
IX.

P 4

the

Many other passages might be added to the same purpose, but they can escape no one who reads the holy scriptures. How amazing then is it after all this, that any set of men should have the presumption to oppose the doctrine of *good works*, and openly to preach against it! How amazing that these men should meet with their admirers and their followers, in a country where the gospel lies open to every christian! Our Saviour preached good works: his apostles preached good works: these men loudly decry them: and yet these are the men who assume to themselves the title of the only gospel-preachers.

“ Choose you this day, O house of Israel,
“ whom ye will serve.”

SECT. the free-gift of God, who in his wisdom planned that constitution, and the result of wise laws established by him for the common good, and for the encouragement of man in a right use of his faculties.

IX.

In the dispensation founded on redemption, the trust to man is enlarged. He is here, in the language of scripture, "thoroughly furnished unto all good works:" all his powers of doing good to others are strengthened and encreased; he receives new light for the direction of those powers, and is called to the exertion of them by the strongest motives to benevolence and charity that can be conceived. If he makes a proper use of these superior advantages, he will be entitled to that exalted happiness which is provided for the encouragement of virtue under this dispensation. The merit in the mean while is entirely his, who procured these advantages for us. The whole merit of salvation is our Redeemer's;

deemer's; he alone could and did SECT.
 purchase it for us, and prescribed the IX.
 conditions on which we are to obtain
 it. By endeavouring to perform his
 will, we do not pretend to lessen the
 merit of what he hath done for us;
 but, on the contrary, to avail ourselves
 of it. We have not the presumption
 to think of saving ourselves, since we
 cannot do that without settling the
 terms of our salvation. The meritor-
 ious price of redemption is already
 paid. What we can do, and what
 we are required to do, is not previous
 to redemption, but consequent upon
 it. It is not to redeem, that the Chri-
 stian raises his structure of good works,
 for he raises it on the foundation of
 those advantages which he hath ob-
 tained by redemption.

Whilst therefore the best Christian
 must own himself an unprofitable ser-
 vant, having done only that which
 was his duty to do, yet there is un-
 doubtedly in the sight of his Redeemer
 a wide

SECT. a wide difference between that good
IX. and faithful servant, who improves the
talent entrusted to him by his lord,
and makes a right use of those inestimable advantages which redemption puts in his power, and that unprofitable servant, who abuses or neglects them. And it is surely no less disparaging of the merits of redemption, to say, that by it, and the helps which we have obtained in consequence of it, we can do nothing good, than to say, that we can do every thing without it. They who maintain the sufficiency of unassisted nature, deny only the necessity of redemption: they who maintain the insufficiency of nature after grace to do any thing good or acceptable in the sight of God, deny the power, and depreciate the effects of redemption.

It will be considered by some as a second objection, that our Lord hath expressly promised salvation to faith without mentioning good works.

Faith

Faith is the leading condition of SECT.
our salvation, and the foundation of IX.
all other christian doctrines and vir-
tues. We cannot wonder therefore,
since through the door of faith we
enter into the christian dispensation,
that all the blessings of that dispen-
sation are said to belong to faith; and
that salvation itself is annexed to faith,
in which it terminates at last, though
through many intermediate steps.

Our Saviour's doctrine is to be taken
from the whole gospel, which was de-
livered by degrees. When he lays the
foundation of his religion, it is with
the utmost propriety that he annexes
salvation to faith, which is the basis of
that religion, and condemnation to in-
fidelity. But since we find these sanc-
tions elsewhere most commonly applied
to a life of virtue, and a life of wicked-
ness, this explains our Lord's meaning
beyond a doubt, and shews that he
considers faith as the basis of good
works, and infidelity as the root of
wickedness;

SECT. wickedness; and that he ascribes to
IX. faith in general what belongs to it
when producing all its proper and natural effects upon the believer.

But it will be urged farther, that Saint Paul attributes salvation to faith, and expressly excludes works.

And here it must be laid down as a maxim, to which all parties are alike bound to assent, that the holy scripture must be so explained as to be every where in perfect consistence with itself. When therefore we meet with any passage of scripture that will admit of two different meanings, one of which sets it in strong opposition to numberless other passages in the sacred writings, which cannot be mistaken, then this rule of consistency obliges us to reject that meaning.

Now this is exactly the case with the passage of Saint Paul alluded to. For if it be taken in that rigorous sense,
which

which makes it utterly exclude the duty and the doctrine of good works from the business of our salvation, then is it made to overthrow a doctrine which it is the business of almost the whole gospel to advance; then is it at variance with a plain passage in Saint James, with which it hath been often contrasted; and then is Saint Paul himself made to explode in one chapter a doctrine which he labours to establish in every other; since there never was a more zealous preacher, nor a more finished pattern of good works, our Saviour alone excepted, than the great apostle of the Gentiles was.

SECT.

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This explanation therefore must undoubtedly be laid aside, which makes Saint Paul contradict himself, and every other sacred writer. It must be laid aside, if there is another plain and consistent sense to be found, by which the harmony of the sacred writers may be preserved.

And

SECT. IX. And yet it must be acknowledged, that there is little satisfaction to be found in that opinion, which confines what Saint Paul here says of the invalidity of works, to the ceremonial works of the Jewish law only. His argument manifestly requires, that the "law of works" here spoken of should be taken in a much greater latitude.

The apostle undertook to shew the necessity of redemption to the circumstances of mankind, and to prove, "that the gospel alone contained the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth". To this end had he contented himself with proving only the insufficiency of the ceremonial works of the Jewish law to obtain our salvation, and proceeded no farther, his conclusion would by no means have followed. The general necessity of redemption for all mankind, could never have been inferred from

^f Rom. i. 16.

from the deficiency of a partial law respecting only one single people. Saint Paul was too great a master of reasoning to frame his argument in a manner so inconclusive. He takes a larger compass, reviews the whole world, and from the common incapacity of all mankind to save themselves, infers the necessity of a redemption. He first considers the state of the Gentile world, and then of the Jews, and shews by undeniable facts that “ all “ have sinned, and come short of the “ glory of God.” By an appeal to their own respective laws, both must be condemned, and “ all the world “ become guilty before God.” In this situation man could have no resource but in “ the free grace of God, thro’ the “ redemption that is in Jesus Christ.” For if works of any kind could have saved him, he then could have saved himself, and redemption would have been an unnecessary thing. “ Therefore “ we conclude, that a man is justified “ by faith without the deeds of the “ law ;”

SECT.
IX.

SECT. "law;" whatever that law may be,

IX. whether the moral law delivered by Moses, or that law of which the more enlightened Heathen boasted, the law of reason and conscience implanted in their breasts. For it was impossible that he could be justified by a law of which he was convicted as a transgressor; and which was therefore so far from covering his guilt, that it must bear testimony against it. A law of works can only justify those by whom that law hath never been violated. Sinful man can never be saved by a law which he cannot fulfil. He must rest all his hopes only on that free mercy, on that "righteousness of God" which is by faith of Jesus Christ, "unto all, and upon all them that believe."

Such is the strong and irresistible train of reasoning, by which this great apostle excludes all works of our own from the ability of saving us, and establisheth his first position, "that
" the

" the gospel of Christ alone is the SECT.
" power of God unto salvation to IX.
" every one that believeth, to the
" Jew first, and also to the Gen-
" tile."

But though he makes this just estimate of all human performances, denying to them a power which indeed they cannot claim, a power of saving us; yet is he so far from discouraging or depreciating our endeavours to do good, so far from giving countenance to that pernicious doctrine of the sufficiency of a quiescent and inactive faith, that he appears evidently to have laid the foundation of faith so deeply in the beginning of his epistle, with no other view, than that he might raise upon it more securely the doctrine of good works. With what a generous warmth of indignation doth he combat that impious tenet, which would reconcile a continuance in sin with a state of grace! And with what strength of argument doth he apply every principle

Q

of

SECT. of our holy faith to the support of
IX.  virtue; shewing clearly, that Christians are bound to devote themselves and all their faculties to its service; to yield themselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and all their members as instruments of righteousness; animating us to a patient perseverance in well-doing, by the prospect of that glory, honour, and immortality, which will by our righteous Judge be rendered to every man that *worketh good*, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile; and proving that there is no other way of obtaining the end of our faith, everlasting life, but by maintaining our freedom from sin, becoming the servants of God, and having our fruit unto holiness.

Nay, he not only enforces in general the obligations to sanctity of life and manners, which our holy profession lays upon us; but after having established these fundamental truths, he descends to particulars, and towards
the

the conclusion of his epistle, draws out from the principles of our faith the most finished system of all relative and social duties that ever was delineated by the pen of man. SECT.
IX.

It appears then from this short review of this epistle to the Romans, an epistle so justly celebrated, but in general so little understood, that the doctrine which Saint Paul effectually establishes in it is, that we can only be saved by that dispensation whose basis is faith, and whose superstructure is good works; it being clearly impossible that sinners should ever obtain salvation under any dispensation whose basis is good works and unfinning obedience.

A doctrine, which is so far from standing in opposition to what Saint James hath advanced on the same subject, that it clearly resolves itself into the very doctrine which that apo-

SECT. the hath established, that “by works
 IX. “faith is made perfect.”

I cannot conclude this head with more propriety than in the words of Saint Ignatius in his epistle to the Ephesians, as a doctrine perfectly corresponding with that of the inspired apostles, which we have been considering, and as the clear result of the whole, that “faith is the beginning “or the principle, and charity the end “or the completion of the christian “life *.”

SECTION

* Οτι ουδεν λανθανει υμεις, εαν τελειως εις Ιησουν Χριστον εχητε την πισιν και την αγαπην, ητις εστιν αρχη ζωης και τελος. αρχη μιν πισις, τελος δε αγαπη. Ep. ad Eph. sec. 14.

SECTION X.

The Conclusion.

I Now beg leave to conclude the SECT.
 whole subject with an address, first X.
 to those who maintaining the suffi-
 ciency of reason, do blindly reject the
 assistance of revelation : and secondly,
 to those who imagine, that revelation
 doth wholly supersede the use of rea-
 son, and exclude its exercise from the
 noblest subject on which it can be em-
 ployed, the subject of religion.

And first, let the advocates of un-
 assisted reason “ produce their cause,
 “ and bring forth their strong reasons”
 in support of it. That first structure
 of religion, wherein human reason and
 human virtue might have had a greater
 share, was laid in ruins by man’s first
 disobedience. By redemption our sy-
 stem of duty is now placed on a new

SECT. and a firmer basis, it is strengthened

X. in all its parts, and new re-inforcements
 given to virtue, which was become
 too feeble to sustain itself. But how
 vainly do you attempt to rear again
 that system which hath been long since
 overthrown; and labour by your own
 strength to repair the ruins of fallen
 nature! An attempt not unlike that of
 the infidels, who in defiance of the
 decrees of Omnipotence, undertook to
 erect again the fallen temple of Jeru-
 salem. Their design was blasted by
 heaven.

You must allow that virtue in a state
 of nature is insufficient for its own
 support. Why then, if you are truly
 lovers of virtue, why will you rob it
 of all those new and powerful helps
 which it receives from religion, "nor
 " hear that virtue, which you love,
 " complain?"

It is on your own principles that we
 embrace faith. Reason leads us to faith.
 Reason

Reason pleads for it, and shews it to be every way worthy of God, every way calculated to promote the dignity of human nature. Reason flies to faith as its only protector, as the only ally that can rescue it from the tyranny of the passions under which it groans, from that base slavery to the inferior part by which it is so shamefully degraded, sunk below itself, and disabled in all its noblest operations.

They misrepresent faith who say, that like a false ally it would enslave that very reason which it was called in to defend. Reason is never so free as when united to faith : all its faculties are strengthened, and all its aims exalted. Its sphere of action is enlarged, new fields of contemplation are laid open before it, where it finds for its exercise objects of the noblest nature, with which it was before little acquainted, and its glorious views are now extended far beyond that narrow circle within which they were before

SECT. confined, even into a boundless eternity.
X.

But what wonder that by one party revelation is mistaken for the enemy of reason, when by another, reason is constantly represented as the enemy of revelation?

Little do these mistaken advocates of religion consider, how much an unskilful defence may injure a cause which they no doubt mean to serve; and how much strength they add to the real adversaries of religion, whilst by a charge so groundless they attempt to force into rebellion one of its surest friends.

It cannot be, that redemption, which was given to improve and exalt our nature, should thus degrade it, by despoiling us of the noblest endowment with which the Omnipotent had distinguished us above the rest of the lower creation. It is reason alone that renders

us worthy of salvation. Take away reason, and man will not be worth saving. Nothing will remain but blind passions, and groveling appetites. Nothing but the brute. SECT. X.

And how shall salvation be addressed to such a being? Without reason, and free-will that belongs to reason, he can neither apprehend the terms of salvation, nor fulfil them. He can neither apprehend our Saviour's merits, nor follow his example. Without reason there can be no faith; the evidence, and the motives of religion are all lost. Man is no longer capable of knowing, of loving, of serving his God and his Redeemer. As rational indeed would be the attempt of that supposed Saint, who is said to have preached the gospel to the inhabitants of the air and of the deep, as to preach salvation to man, if you suppose him without reason; or, which amounts to the same thing, that his reason is of no use in religion.

Can

SECT. Can there be a clearer proof, that
X. God intended we should make use of
our understanding in his service, than
that he hath every way applied and
suited his religion to our understanding?
Why hath he so admirably fitted out
his system of religious laws, and all
that bright display of evidence with
which they are attended, compleating
the design with so much beauty, fixing
every part with such nice propriety,
and adjusting the whole with such due
proportion, that we cannot cease to
admire it; but the more we enquire,
the more we discover throughout of
wisdom and admirable contrivance:
why is this ample and this glorious
field prepared for the exercise of our
reason, if yet our reason must be re-
strained from entering upon it?

Can it be, that it should be a sacri-
lege for the understanding to lay hold
of that knowledge which the gospel
holds forth to it? Can it be, that its
sacred truths are no better than the
fruit

fruit of that ancient tree of trial which SECT.
it will be death for our reason to taste? X.

Shall we charge the Creator with giving reason and truth in vain? Reason not to be exercised, and truth not to be understood?

Indeed the necessity of reason in apprehending the evidences of revelation, hath been so often urged, and is in itself so extremely obvious, that even they who seem most inclined to prevent its entrance on the sacred ground, and to send it an exile into the world of nature, have been compelled to admit its right of proceeding thus far. But they seem not to be aware that the use of reason is no less necessary in every part of religion, than in the bare investigation of its evidence. It is as necessary to the knowledge of the laws of christianity, as of its evidence. The very existence of religion in the soul depends on the knowledge of God, the knowledge of our Redeemer, and the knowledge of ourselves. Take away knowledge from religion, and
you

SECT. you leave nothing but intemperate zeal,

X. wild enthusiasm, or dark superstition.

Even in our devotions, if we must pray with the heart, and with all the warmth of pious affection, we are assured that we ought to pray with the understanding likewise. Petition, praise, and thanksgiving, if they are not accompanied with some knowledge of the grounds of those duties, as they are laid in a sense of our own wants, and of the infinite power and unbounded mercy of God, can never be esteemed a reasonable service.

When our Lord directs us to worship God in spirit and in truth, he enjoins the use of that power of the soul, without which truth itself cannot be distinguished. For by what other power but the understanding can God be worshipped in truth? And which of our faculties shall take the lead in religious duties, when reason shall be excluded?

There is no character under which our Lord seems with so much pleasure to

to represent his dispensation, as that of SECT.
truth. But the understanding is the X.
only seat of truth; of revealed truth
as much as of every other kind. Truth
can be embraced only by the under-
standing, to which it is as evidently
related, as light is to the power of
vision. The establishment of the object
supposes the use of the corresponding
faculty, without which in vain would
the object be established. As clearly
then as the light, poured out upon the
face of the creation, points out the
use of vision, so clearly doth that truth,
which shines through every part of
revelation, point out the use of that
faculty, by which alone truth is com-
prehended and discerned.

No one fact is more clear in the
whole history of the human mind,
than that reason hath been improved
by revelation. It is undeniable, that
the efforts of the human mind have
been much stronger, and its success
much greater in deducing from their
first principles, and explaining all the
moral

SECT. moral and social duties of life since the
X. publication of the gospel, than they
were before. And yet you will hardly
venture to maintain, that the human
mind doth now possess a native force
surpassing that with which it was en-
dowed in those bright periods of genius
which preceeded the introduction of
the gospel. Experience therefore joins
with revelation itself, in proving that
the mind is so far from being weakened
or depressed by the gospel, that it de-
rives new strength from it, and is
never cultivated with so much success,
never yields so ample or so rich a pro-
duce as where it lies open to the in-
fluence of the gospel.

Faith and reason are so far from
being rivals, or adversaries, that there
is the clearest relation, and the strictest
union between them. Reason without
faith is feeble and obscure. Faith with-
out reason, if it is possible that there
can be faith without reason, is no better
than "a light shining in that darkness
" which comprehendeth it not."

In

In a word, it cannot be that the mind should be obscured; and its light extinguished under a dispensation, which was given expressly to remove the errors, and to lighten the darkness of our souls. Light is the favourite character by which the gospel is described both in the prophetic and the evangelical writings. Ours is the inestimable advantage of having our understandings conducted by that true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Ours is the unspeakable happiness to behold that glory which shines round the only-begotten of the Father, a glory as we are assured, not supplied by grace alone, but formed by the mingled and united rays of GRACE and TRUTH.

SECT.
X.

To sum up all, faith is given for the improvement of the human soul; and all its powers, our reason, our affections, and our will, obtain their perfection by being exercised in its service. Faith is given to fit us for heaven; and as far as we can apprehend, the chief pleasures even of a future state will be intellectual.

Strange

SECT. Strange therefore indeed would it be to
X. suppose that that faculty should have no
concern in religion, which is to be the
chief seat even of our heavenly pleasures.
Faith fills the soul with knowledge as
well as virtue; and the truths, as well as
the virtues, which it here imbibes from
the gospel, shall exercise its growing fa-
culties to all eternity. That dawning light
of celestial truth which we here enjoy,
shall in heaven encrease into a bright
eternal day.

Faith is an instrument which the hea-
venly Agent employs for the amendment
and sanctification of our souls. When
faith shall be succeeded by perfect vision,
the instrument shall be laid aside.

As the sun enlightens the material
world, and shews us all the wonders of
nature, so doth faith here enlighten the
religious system. But the time will come,
when the sun shall be turned into dark-
ness, and when faith shall be no more.

F I N I S.



